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PAN DAMAZY

A Comedy in Four Acts

by

Józef Bliziński

* * *

Translated from the Polish

by

Elizabeth Munk Clark

and

George Rapall Noyes



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7158

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1900

TRANSLATORS' NOTE

Jozef Bliziniński (1827-93) is, next to Fredro, the most famous Polish writer of comedies. Pan Damazy (composed in 1876-77) is his masterpiece. The play has a skilfully constructed plot, but its peculiar merit is in the presentation of a group of finely contrasted, well-rounded characters. In particular, Pan Damazy himself, the rustic squire whose rough, unpolished exterior masks a most upright, generous, and affectionate nature, is a figure whom the Poles love to regard as typical of their nation.

CHARACTERS

Pani Zegocina

Pani Tykalska, her sister.

Seweryn)
) their nephews.
Antoni)

Pan Damazy Zegota

Helena, his daughter.

Bajdalski, a notary.

Genio, his son.

Manka

Jan, a servant.

The action takes place in the country, in Pani Zegocina's house and garden.

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Note.--The names are pronounced Zhě-gō-chě-nă, Sě-vě-rĭn, An-tŏ'-nyĭ, Dă-mă-zĭ, Bai-dăl'-skĭ, Gě-nyŏ (hard g), Yăn. "Zegota" and "Zegocina" are masculine and feminine forms of the same name. "Pan" and "Pani" are the ordinary Polish words for "Mr." and "Mrs.", but they carry a trifle more distinction than their English equivalents, so that "Pan Damazy" verges on "Squire Damazy." "Zegocina" (and "Zegota") might be translated "Nettle"; and "Tykalska", "Easymark."

PAN DAMAZY

ACT I

The scene represents a room, the main door in the rear leading to the entrance hall; side doors on either side; on the left, a little in the foreground, a sofa; beyond, a writing desk, etc.; at the right, a full-length wall mirror and a window.

SCENE I

SEWERYN is lying on the sofa with a book in his hand, and smoking a cigarette. ANTONI, also with a cigarette, is looking out of the window.

SEWERYN. (After a few moments of silence) We certainly are enjoying ourselves, aren't we?

ANTONI. (Arousing himself from his thoughts, in a joking manner) Hm! The quiet of the grave has come over us.

SEWERYN. Which with you is a phenomenal occurrence.

ANTONI. The idea! But listen: we were to go duck-hunting; get yourself ready.

SEWERYN. I don't want to.

ANTONI. (Taking his gun, which is standing at the rear of the room) Confound you! On my word, what an old woman they ^{have} made of you.-- Are you afraid you'll get your feet wet, maybe?

SEWERYN. ^{So} Oh, be quiet.

ANTONI. Well, well, auntie must have forbidden her Benjamin to hunt, for fear that he may catch cold, or hurt himself--for she has spasms at the very sight of firearms. (SEWERYN, not answering, goes on reading.--After a few moments) Under such conditions, I should be ready to renounce all my advantages--to be like a child in swaddling clothes!--Bah! Then you absolutely won't go?

SEWERYN. (*Ironically*) If any^{body}one heard us talking, he would take you for an enthusiastic hunter, ready to break your own neck for the sake of a single snipe or woodcock; and, in the meantime, instead of strolling the fields, you have been trudging for three days already, along a most prosaic highway, tracking an entirely different kind of game. You think that I don't know.

ANTONI. Perhaps you do know, but not everything. You come with me, and I'll tell you the rest.

SEWERYN. Why certainly, along that road Pan Damazy Zegota is to arrive with Helena? There now! Are you blushing?

ANTONI. I don't intend to conceal the fact that I look forward to their arrival with great eagerness.

SEWERYN. Aha! I guessed as much.

ANTONI. Yes, you've guessed, you've guessed! (Looking around) And if I desired you to accompany me to the fields, then it was because, profiting by a couple of leisure hours,

I wanted to unburden myself to you.-- For you see, my dear fellow, I need your judgment and advice.

SEWERYN. And you know that your romance interests me. So, tell me, how far have you gone with that little goose? The old man doesn't suspect anything, does he?

ANTONI. (With animation) Why this tone all of a sudden! I see that you have an entirely false notion of the relations between us. I love Helena, you understand; I love her, and I will marry her--naturally, if they will give her to me.

SEWERYN. Oh, for the Lord's sake! They will be only too glad to do so! (Rising) But you're crazy.

ANTONI. (As before) Seweryn!

SEWERYN. A fine match! You've certainly got the future in mind!

ANTONI. Match, match--I'm not after a match, only a wife. (He sits down and rolls a cigarette.)

SEWERYN. In the first place, she is not pretty. (ANTONI laughs aloud.) But permit me then: ^{as far as} ~~simply taking~~ her ^{90,} in detail, she is above reproach; but for me there is something distasteful about her.

ANTONI. Really?

SEWERYN. I give you my word--seriously. Further, as I have said, she's a little country goose--I don't say she is not all right for a short acquaintance, but married to her!--And her father--in heaven's name, a common hayseed!

What sort of breeding could he give her?

ANTONI. An honest one, and that's enough. But, however, permit me to say that you're passing judgment by guesswork. Do you know her well enough to judge? Very likely you've never even spoken with her.

SEWERYN. I admit that I have made no efforts to do so. Once I was at their home with my aunt; just in passing, of course, for you know, she has no great liking for them. And so it is a wonder to me how she's taken a notion to invite them here, for no reason whatever.

ANTONI. And I can't understand this either.--But what of it? You are straying from the subject.

SEWERYN. And so we found ourselves there by chance. What a house! What provincialism! You couldn't sneeze without their wishing you a hundred years of health.

ANTONI. (With comical dignity) And who sneezes when paying a visit?

SEWERYN. Be that as it may; as a guest, I felt it my duty to entertain the girl. But then conversation lagged, and I didn't know what to chat about. I began with literature; it didn't work.

ANTONI. Now you're lying.

SEWERYN. Well, she may have had a taste of it--but what does that amount to! I mentioned Warsaw--she had never been there. Then I began a dissertation on young

pigs and goslings, on the breeding of young chickens, and how to cure them of the pip, but it didn't please papa.-- He began to wink and to clear his throat significantly, as if he feared that I should blurt out something off-color.

ANTONI. Did you have to get off something, in your usual manner?

SEWERYN. Of course not. On my honor, we were speaking most becomingly. After lunch they proposed a walk, and since there is no garden there, we went to the cow-shed, with the girl of course--and with Dziubalska, it seems to me that was her name. (Laughing) Do you know her?

ANTONI. The most honorable woman in the world--she brought up Helena.

SEWERYN. Then will you believe that Dziubalska ordered the calves to be taken from the cows, to make certain that the suckling of the progeny should not excite any bad thoughts in the young lady. It's clear that she will not even be a good housewife. I don't know what they are raising her to be.

ANTONI. What silly talk! If you knew her at closer range, as I do, you would be convinced what diamonds of mind and heart are hidden under that provincial covering, as you call it.

SEWERYN. (Scoffing) Yes, yes, of course.

ANTONI. (Impatiently getting up) And furthermore,

I love her, and that's all there is to it--and since, as I hope, you have exhausted by now your whole stock of reproaches--

SEWERYN. I am keeping the most important for the last.

ANTONI. For instance?

SEWERYN. She's poor as a churchmouse.

ANTONI. Oh!

SEWERYN. (Mimicking) Oh!--That sounds good!--Oh!--
I say, you are romantic. We never shall understand each other. We differ in too many of our ideas.

ANTONI. It's not my fault, if you have only a piece of meat inside you instead of a heart.

SEWERYN. (Rising) My dear fellow, whether I have a heart or have not, you are ~~not~~^{un} able to judge. Who knows whether, at bottom, I am not ~~different~~^{other} than I seem.

ANTONI. Then you are wearing a mask, are you?

SEWERYN. You know that I am dependent upon auntie, and that in return for her promise to leave me the estate, something is due her from me.

ANTONI. Well, all this is not quite clear to me.

SEWERYN. When I stand upon sure ground, then it will be possible to discover something for my heart, but meanwhile--

ANTONI. But meanwhile, because the thing that you call a heart, you libertine, is merely temperament, you

can amuse yourself with Manka.--I understand!

SEWERYN. (Looking around) Be still! What are you talking about?

ANTONI. Oh, you will have that girl on your conscience.

SEWERYN. (Swaggering) But she's pretty, isn't she?

ANTONI. (Ironically) She has found fine protection,-- and yet they say that she's some sort of distant cousin.

SEWERYN. (Jestingly) My aunt ^{does} slight^s her a little, but on the other hand, she has ^{found} in me--

ANTONI. A benefactor--

SEWERYN. That's it! I think of her future,--

ANTONI. Are you going to marry her?

SEWERYN. (Laughing as if he had heard something monstrous) You're a fine one! Only listen to me: Don't by any chance talk of this before auntie, for you might make a mess of it.

ANTONI. Fine intentions they are, that you must conceal!

SEWERYN. What's that? You don't know auntie. Even as things are, she'd like to get rid of her delicately; she is urging her to take vows as a sister of charity. The girl guards herself from such temptations as best she can, but the slightest suspicion would be enough for her to fall a victim....!

ANTONI. Choosing between the two evils, since she must be a victim in any case.

SEWERYN. Oh, give us a rest, stop joking. But to return to what we were talking about a while ago, what sort of advice did you want of me?

ANTONI. Oh, nothing at present.

SEWERYN. Speak out, please.

ANTONI. Well then, since they are to arrive here, I wanted to ask auntie to declare my intentions to Pan Damazy; and since you are in her good graces, I thought--

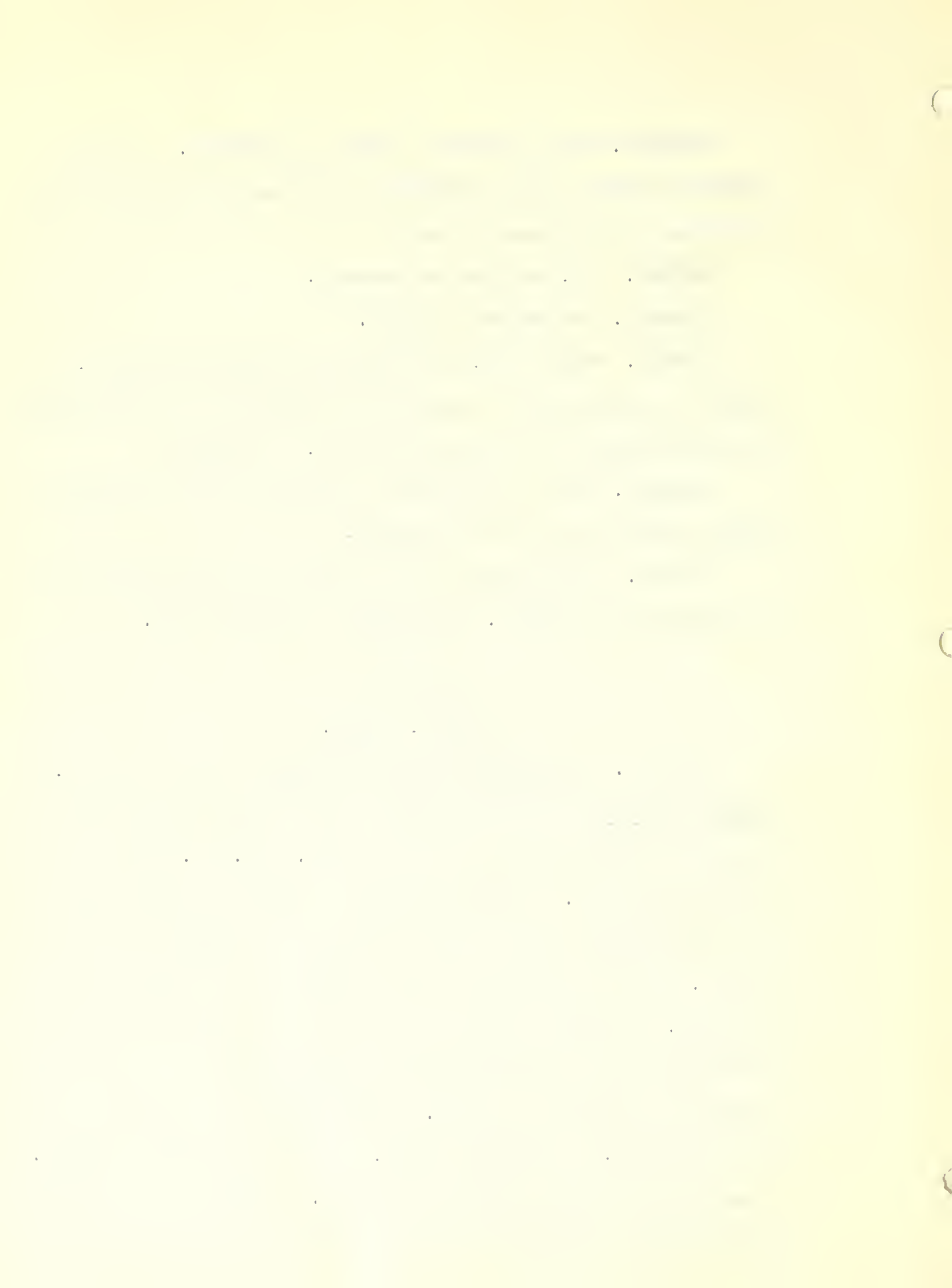
SEWERYN. Well, if you hope that she will leave something to you, to you or to Helena--

ANTONI. I see that we shall never get anywhere today by talking--so goodbye. (He goes out at the rear.)

SCENE II

SEWERYN, alone.

SEWERYN. (Sitting down on the sofa) How irritable!-- (After a moment) Nevertheless, I could swear that he is counting on some benefits from auntie.--Ha! ha!--He is greatly mistaken. (After a moment) But after all, who has the greater right to that property? (Rising) When I get it, they will say that roast ^{pigeons} doves have fallen into my mouth.--But will anyone understand how much it cost me in effort and in self-control?--(Jeeringly) He is working, they say, they call it work! He manages a farm, and does as he pleases! If that is work, then I am worked to death. I am going through purgatory in life. (Wringing his hands and gritting his teeth) To suffocate in a mast that is



heavy as lead, kissing a hand which I should like to bite till the blood came--and they marvel then, when a man who has gone through such a school, seeks revenge on others!--
(After a moment) Someone is coming! (He lies down again and takes the book.)

SCENE III

SEWERYN, MANKA

MANKA comes in from the right; and then, pretending that she does not see SEWERYN, she goes to the mirror and, humming a tune, arranges her hair.

SEWERYN. (Getting up from the sofa, he looks around and draws near her) Manka darling!

MANKA. (Crying out with pretended terror) Oh!

SEWERYN. (Jumping back) Be quiet, for heaven's sake!

MANKA. You horrid fellow! How can you frighten people so?

SEWERYN. (From a distance) Only don't you pretend, please!

MANKA. You appeared unexpectedly in the mirror, as if you were a phantom.

SEWERYN. (Approaching cautiously) Do I look so frightful?

MANKA. Ha! ha! ha!

SEWERYN. Be quiet! What are you laughing at again?

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MANKA. It seems to me that you are still more frightened than I.--Well, well, don't be afraid--neither of the aunts will see or hear us.

SEWERYN. (Sourly) Don't try to be funny.

MANKA. Both are in the garden with that guest who arrived today. (At the window) Oh, look here, please.

SEWERYN. (Drawing near) In the garden? (He clasps her around the waist, and tries to kiss her.)

MANKA. (Drawing away, seriously) Come, come, what does this mean?

SEWERYN. (Ardently) Manka!

MANKA. Please don't forget yourself.

SEWERYN. Why are you playing this comedy?

MANKA. (Freeing herself from his embrace) What do you mean?

SEWERYN. You came here because you knew you would find me here.

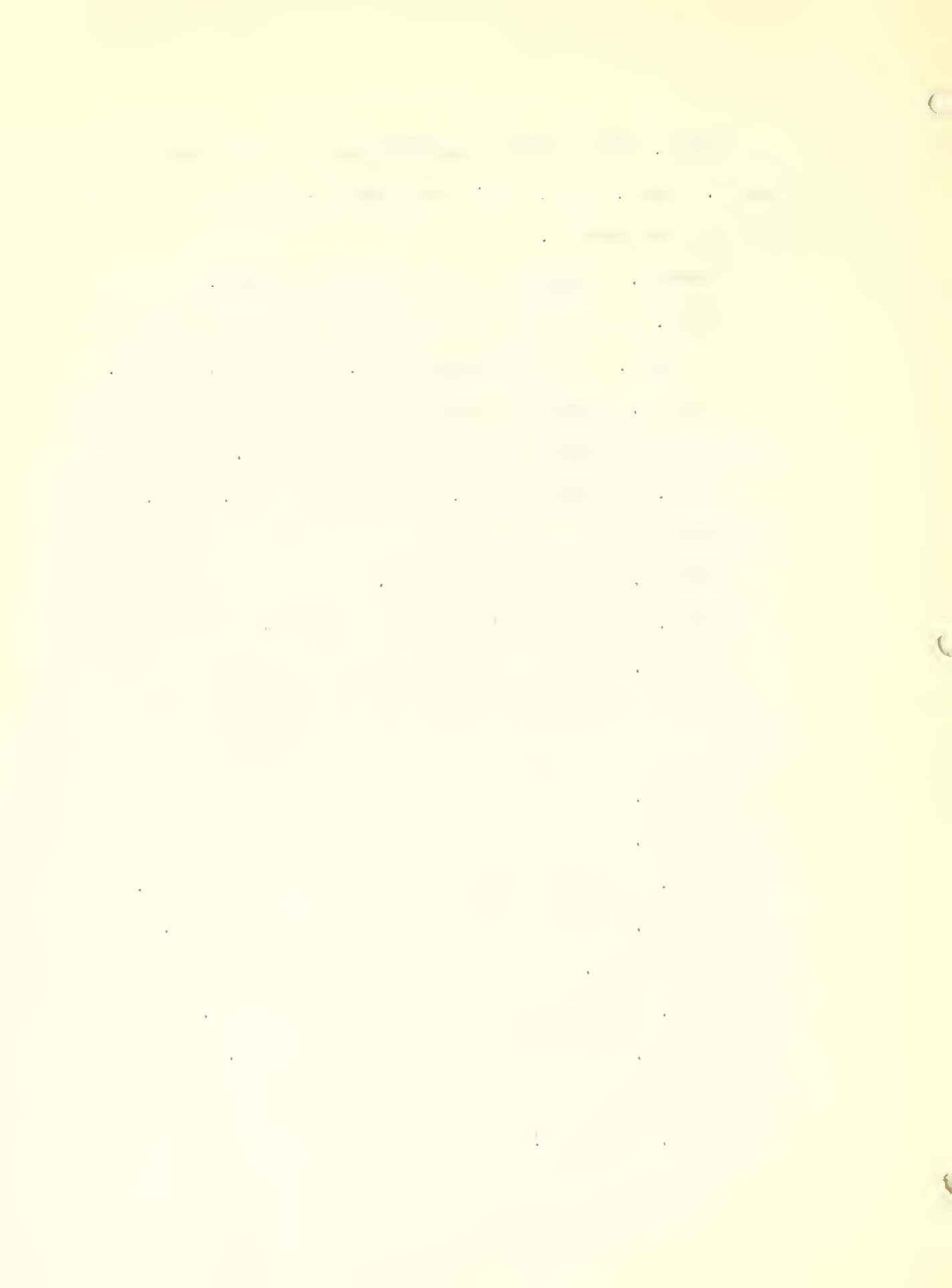
MANKA. (As before) And was I looking for you, pray?

SEWERYN. Your blushes are a witness ^{to} of that. You are flushed all over.

MANKA. (Hiding her face) I'm very sorry.

SEWERYN. And now you pretend sternness. That's a familiar trick.

MANKA. Pretend!



SEWERYN. (Kissing her hands) Yes pretend! Don't your eyes tell me so plainly?

MANKA. Even if you read in them some weakness for yourself, that still does not authorize you to treat me in such a fashion.

SEWERYN. Passion refuses to submit to any restraint.-- Don't you know that I love you?

MANKA. You haven't given me any proof of it so far.

SEWERYN. You say this?

MANKA. Whoever loves truly, is not afraid of broad daylight and does not need to surround himself with mysteries.

SEWERYN. Am I to blame that you refuse to understand our situation?

MANKA. I understand that you are not self-dependent, and that you are under supervision....!

SEWERYN. Manka, don't make me angry.

MANKA. I'm telling you just how it is. Otherwise, should you need to conceal what you say you feel for me?

SEWERYN. I will free myself from this situation. I must free myself, for your sake....

MANKA. And what then?

SEWERYN. I will start on my own.

MANKA. And then?

SEWERYN. I will create a paradise for you.

MANKA. Then it must be kept a secret from your aunt--



for she would drive us out of it.

SEWERYN. (Irritated) Manka!

MANKA. Oh, let me alone!

SEWERYN. I shall find a means to win my independence; it will be my sole endeavor. (After a moment, more quietly) Do you know, my aunt wants to marry me into a rich family, promising in such case to bequeath me the estate--and on her own account--

MANKA. (Pushing him away and looking into his eyes)
What, what?

SEWERYN. But let me speak--I love you alone, since you alone have enchanted me.... (Violently) Don't run away. Don't tease me.... Only one kiss. (Aside, perceiving ANTONI) He's here again! (He frees MANKA.)

SCENE IV

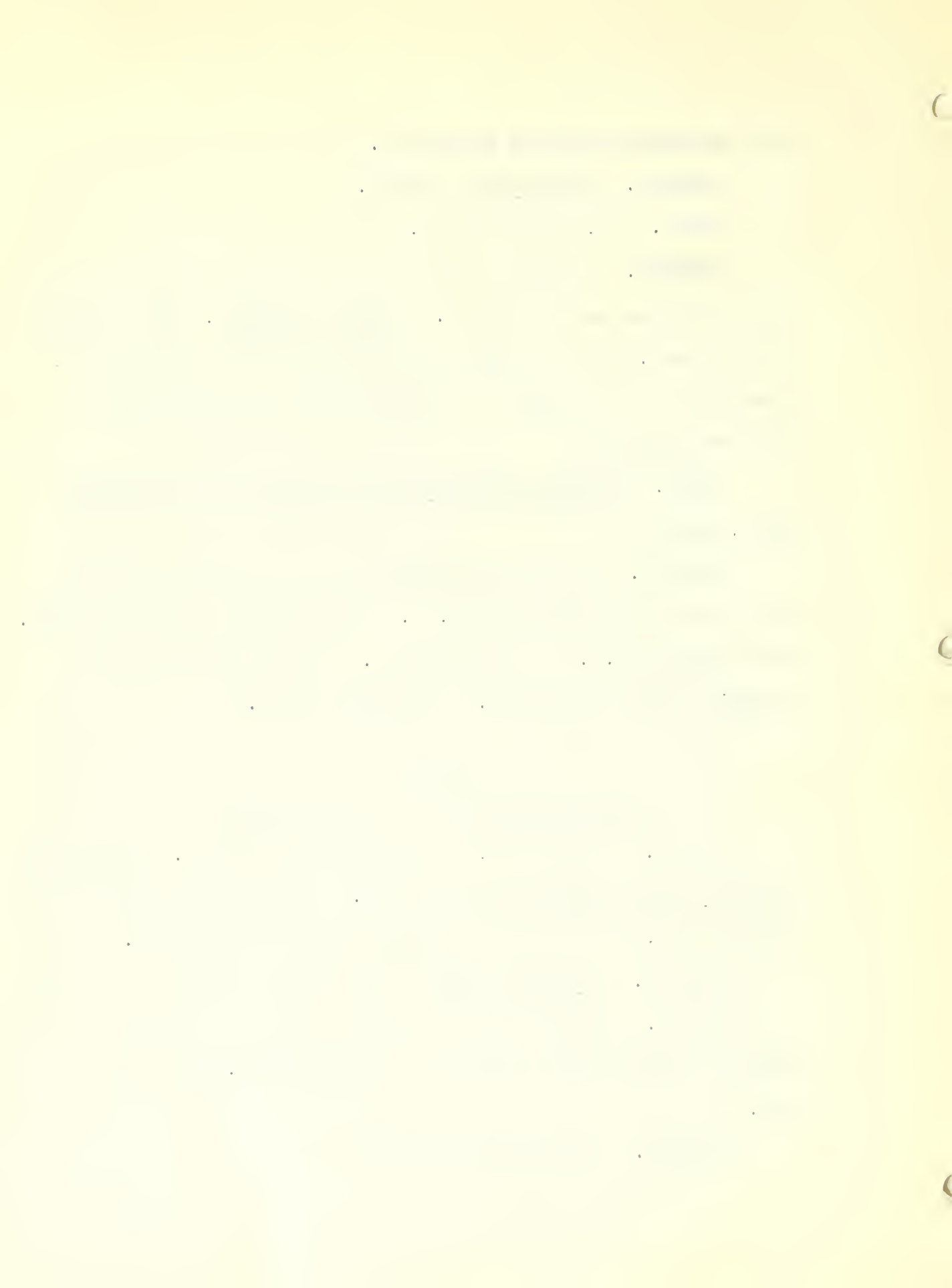
The same and ANTONI (at the rear)

ANTONI. In my talk, I forgot my cartridges. (He takes them from the armchair at the rear. Perceiving SEWERYN and MANKA) Aha! So this couple has wasted no time here!

SEWERYN. (Sitting down) Well, did you shoot anything?

ANTONI. A man never has a more stupid appearance than when he finds himself where he is not needed.--But it's done now.

SEWERYN. Are you going back?



ANTONI. Why, of course. (Drawing near MANKA) But profiting by this occasion I feel it my duty to assume for a moment the role of moralizer. (Taking her hand) Panna Marya, listen to my well-meant advice. Guard against words that cannot be repeated before witnesses.

MANKA. (Catching sight of newcomers, withdraws her hand) Do let me alone.--People are coming. (She goes out at the left.)

SCENE V

SEWERYN, ANTONI, TYKALSKA (in a modest dress, knitting a stocking), ZEGOCINA (in black half-mourning), NOTARY.

They enter from the rear.

J ZEGOCINA. Fine state of affairs! What indecent forwardness is this? I was right in maintaining that Pan Antoni was always the worst example for dear Seweryn; he is the very picture of his deceased father.--With that frivolous temperament you will turn out like him, I tell you.

ANTONI. (Seriously) I have already asked you many times, auntie, to respect the memory of our father.*

ZEGOCINA. So really, an aunt may not reprehend a silly youth even when he conducts himself in such an unseemly

* The father of Antoni and Seweryn took part in the Polish insurrection of 1863 against Russia. - Translators.



fashion in her house....

ANTONI. (As before) No doubt you may discover in me all kinds of bad tendencies, as you always do, auntie, but you must not dishonor the memory of a man whose worth no feminine intellect is capable of appreciating.

ZEGOCINA. (To the NOTARY) Do you hear him?

SEWERYN. (To himself) I'm certainly in luck! (He looks for his hat,)

TYKALSKA. (To ANTONI as he is leaving) Antoni dear, what have you done now, you rogue?

ANTONI. Oh, please don't ask me, auntie. I'm shaking all over. (He goes out at the rear.)

TYKALSKA. (Shaking her finger at him) Oh, you--you--bad boy!

SCENE VI

SEWERYN, TYKALSKA, ZEGOCINA, the NOTARY

ZEGOCINA. The abominable fellow. I instinctively disliked him even from his earliest boyhood.

TYKALSKA. Our Antoni! Why so?

ZEGOCINA. (In a tone of lofty condescension) My dear Tykalska, pray not a word! You're such a credulous person.

NOTARY. You must be eh--eh--eh--far too tender-hearted.

TYKALSKA. My dear sir, I don't suffer from heart disease. I am not conscious of any palpitations.

NOTARY. Such a disposition often brings us--eh--ch--eh--

... ..

delusions. I can testify from my own experience.

ZEGOCINA. In his face, as well as in his whole character, Antoni reminds me of my honored brother-in-law-- may the Lord forgive his sins! (To SEWERYN, who, taking his hat, has started for the door) Where are you going, Seweryn dear?

SEWERYN. I'm going to look about the farm.

ZEGOCINA. (Kissing him on the head) On the other hand, because you're the absolute image of my dear Amelia, who fell a victim to that union, my beloved child, you have a heart, and will not be such a man as your father, will you?

SEWERYN. (Kissing her hand) I endeavor always to repay my aunt for her affection by my behavior.

ZEGOCINA. A dear honest boy; you are my consolation.-- And likewise I think of your future, and I desire that your brother may be convinced that one must not disregard the good-will of an aunt who holds in her hands the means to make happy those who manage to respect her. You will not imitate him, will you?

SEWERYN. Auntie, please rest assured--

ZEGOCINA. The Lord bless you!

NOTARY. (Taking a pinch of snuff, to himself) Phew! phew! eh--eh--He's a sly fellow, I swear!

TYKALSKA. (In a low voice to SEWERYN, who is going out)



You should be ashamed, Seweryn dear--you are a bad brother.

SCENE VII

The same, without SEWERYN

NOTARY. A pleasant young gentleman, very pleasant--eh--eh--eh--but the former is also pleasant. Both of them very--eh--eh--eh--

ZEGOCINA. Indeed, my dear notary, they are own brothers; but what a difference, like day and night.

NOTARY. By dear benefactress, as a woman with a heart--you may be misled....

ZEGOCINA. Indeed no, no, the heart does not err.

NOTARY. Kind lady, without boasting, nature has bestowed on me, in her maternal fashion, that, so to speak--eh--eh--superfluous piece of furniture, so I know a little about it. The heart, like a real piece of furniture, we should carry--eh--ch--eh--in a case, to be taken off only at solemn moments--otherwise it grows dingy.

TYKALSKA. (Seated at one side with her stocking) My dear sir, what are you chattering about--a heart in a case!

ZEGOCINA. (Compassionately) Oh, Tykalska, are you attempting to dispute!-- (To the NOTARY) But not every one can have such power over himself.

TYKALSKA. (Laughing) As to hide it in a case!

NOTARY. I, without boasting, thanks to that very power,



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have developed for myself a philosophic view of the world and its inhabitants. I look with compassion on the battles fought every day in the name of interests which--eh--eh--eh--in comparison to the great riddles of infinity, amount to no more than this! (He blows on his fingers.)

ZEGOCINA. (Adjusting herself to the tone of the conversation) Oh, that is true, when you reflect more deeply.

NOTARY. My dear lady, as a notary--eh--eh--eh--a priest and guardian of the law, I had need of this philosophy. What it cost me, you may guess for yourself.--But, while I am, without boasting, by nature a man with a heart, nevertheless today, in the fulfillment of the functions of my office, I am as impartial and inflexible as Cato.

ZEGOCINA. My deceased husband had entire confidence in you.

NOTARY. And he was never deceived,--~~At~~ present, it is my ardent desire that his wife should inherit that conviction. (He kisses her hand.) As a truthful man, I confess frankly that this thought eh--eh--eh--has brought me here. I judge that in your position, my dear benefactress, since you are left alone, the advice of a man, who, without boasting, is honest, and a friend of your deceased husband, need not be objectionable.

ZEGOCINA. Indeed, notary, you have anticipated my desire. You will not believe at what a fortunate moment you



have come here.

[NOTARY. I am at your service. (He kisses her hand.)

TYKALSKA. My deceased Toby left me nothing when he died, so I have never needed any notaries.

ZEGOCINA. My dear Tykalska, please give us time to speak of our business at our leisure.--You are such a bore--you track after us like a shadow.

TYKALSKA. But, my dear sister, I did not know that I was bothering you. Oh, for heaven's sake, if that's the case, then I'll leave. (She goes out at the right.)

SCENE VIII

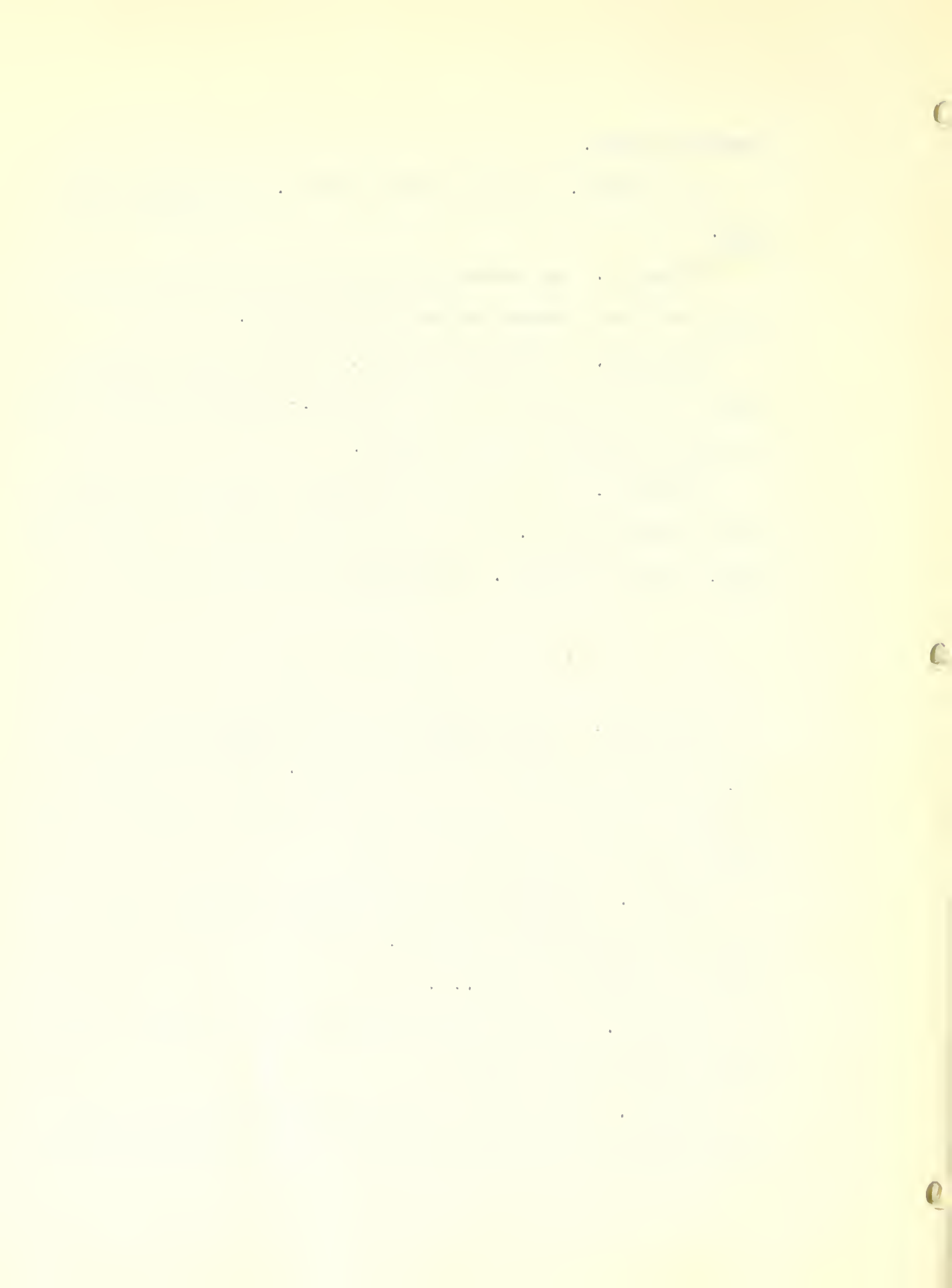
NOTARY, ZEGOCINA

ZEGOCINA. (Frequently going into ecstasies) Oh, my dear notary, a widow is a mere orphan!--Being deprived in a single moment of the support which she had from her husband, she is at the mercy of other people.

NOTARY. (Kissing her hand, significantly) Dear lady, in that eh--eh--eh--situation, certainly you will not be left for long all alone....

ZEGOCINA. What are you talking about, notary? Do you not see my widow's weeds?

NOTARY. Your weeds are only--eh--eh--eh--the symbol of a transitory condition; in due time the grief-stricken



spirit needs and has the right to desire consolation--that is its due.

ZEGOCINA. Oh, notary, I don't think about that.

NOTARY. For the time being--for the time being--I can understand, of course.

ZEGOCINA. I have other obligations--to fulfill them satisfactorily is my sole desire.

NOTARY. You have every facility; the deceased Pan Zegota left his wife in a position assuring her independence. That joint will,* which was always his chief concern--

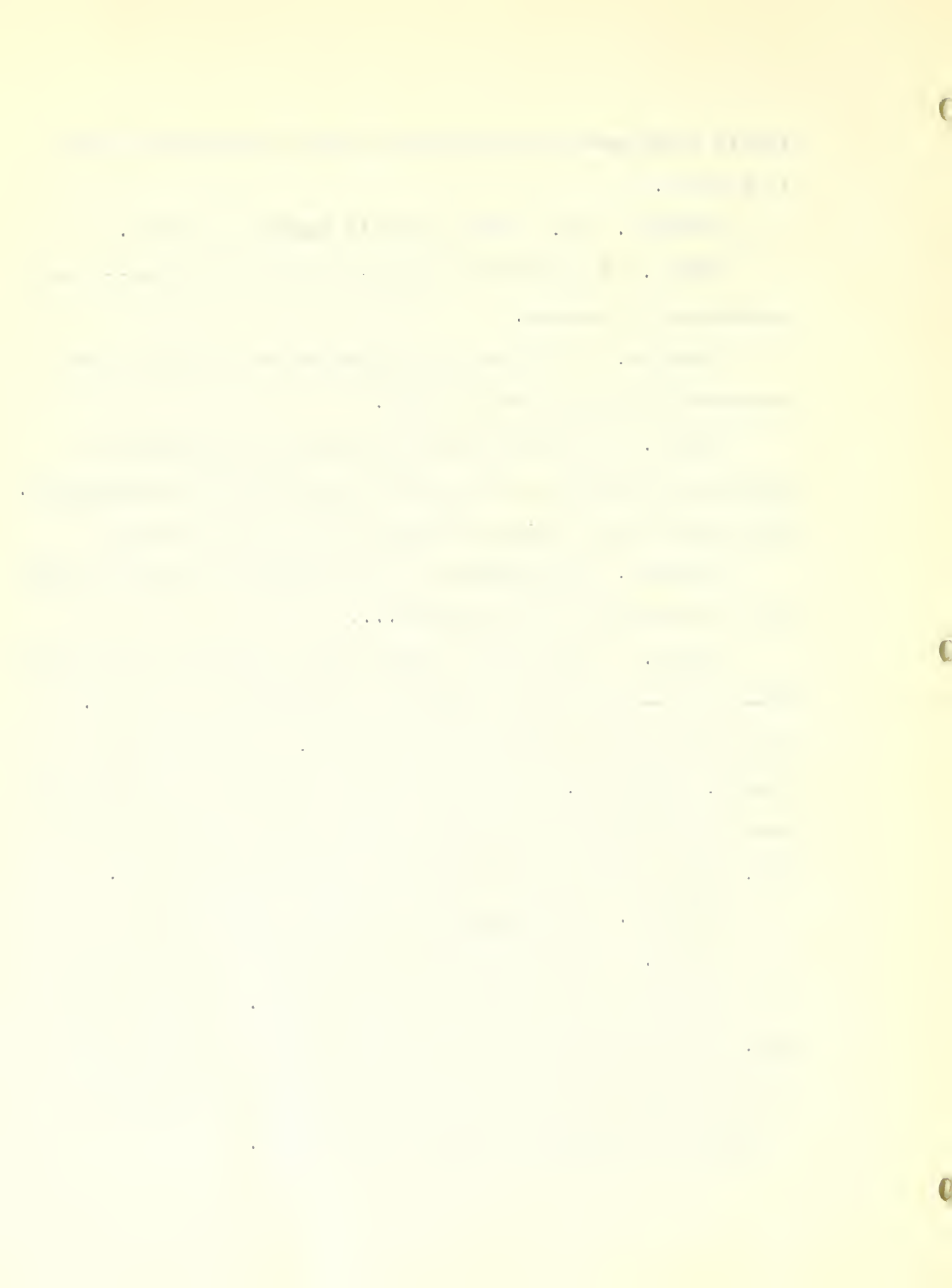
ZEGOCINA. (Excitedly) It was always his desire, wasn't it? You yourself are a witness....

NOTARY. I understand your delicate scruples, they give--
^{eh} he--eh--eh--flattering testimony concerning your heart.--
After the death of your former husband, his brother, Pan Damazy, ipso jure, would have taken possession of nearly the whole inheritance for himself, and the law would have given you, being without children, only a fourth part of it.

ZEGOCINA. (Restlessly) So that is really how it is?

NOTARY. I am surprised that your husband and you did not subscribe that document in my presence. Without boasting, I should have given it my most careful attention, so

* A will made by two parties, each securing to the other his entire property in case of his death.



that its validity should be indisputable. Of course, you and your husband drew it up privately, and not being acquainted with it, I can not judge how valid it is. Rumors have reached me that Pan Damazy--

ZEGOCINA. What? What? Speak!

NOTARY. --has intimated in a convincing manner that he knows the rights which he should have to the inheritance, if this joint will had not been executed,--and at the same time he has expressed his doubts as to its existence.

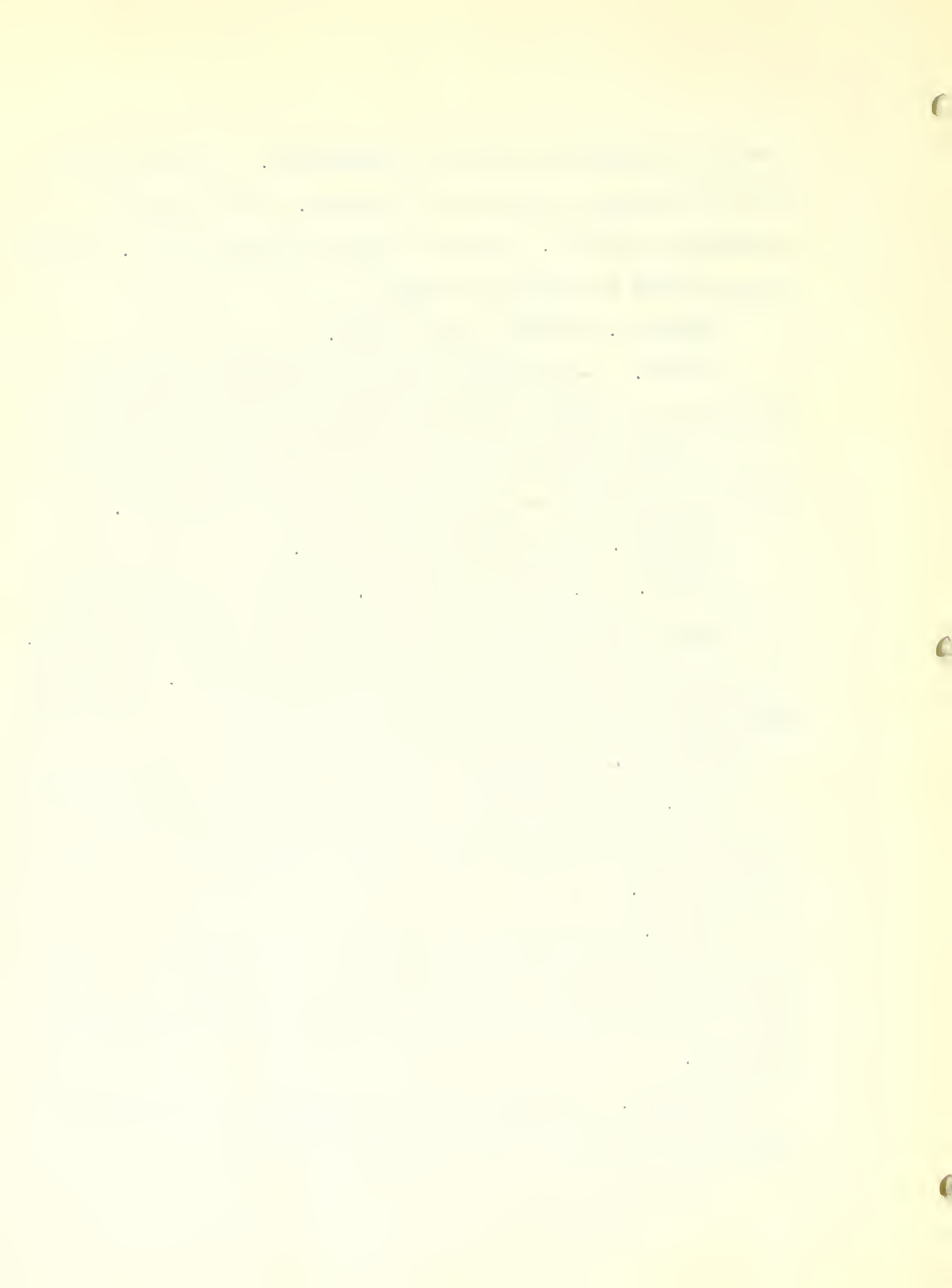
ZEGOCINA. Oh, have mercy, notary!

NOTARY. Oh, don't be afraid! As far as it may be in my power I will support you with my advice, only, above all, you must be frank, and have implicit faith in me. (Kissing her hand) You have ~~with you~~ that document? *with you?*

ZEGOCINA. (Weeping) You were a witness to our manner of living, to the devotion with which I nursed the decrepit old man, to the patience with which I endured his violence and caprices.

NOTARY. Kind lady, do you need to tell me that? It was generally known, that in spite of a considerable difference in age you were the best, the most exemplary--eh--eh--eh--wife.

ZEGOCINA. I offered all my sufferings to God in the hope that they would be set down in my favor.



NOTARY. And that the deceased would acknowledge these merits; since--eh--eh--eh--good is never left without a reward. Those words still ring in my ears, in which, I speak without boasting, having full confidence in me, he communicated to me his project for a mutual legacy.

ZEGOCINA. You could testify to that, couldn't you?

NOTARY. That would be entirely superfluous. It will be enough merely to produce and to legalize the document. You may depend upon me. (He grasps her hand.)

ZEGOCINA. (Bursting into tears) Notary, help me! The Lord will reward you for it. (She leans her head upon his shoulder.)

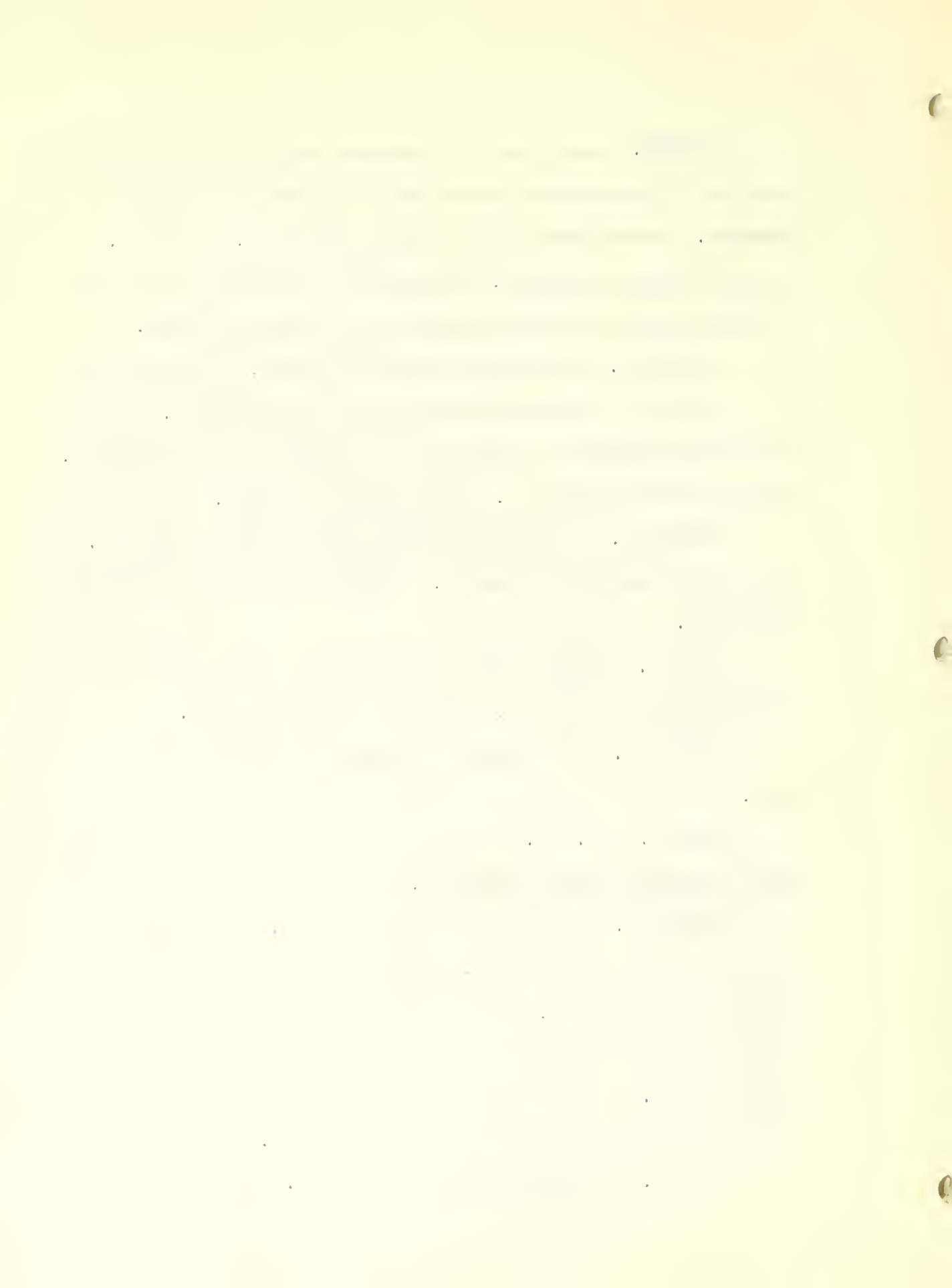
NOTARY. (With greedy curiosity) Do you foresee any illegality? Above all, I must ask for the will.

ZEGOCINA. (As before, tragically) There isn't any at all!

NOTARY. Ah! ^aAh!--(He frees himself from her embrace and paces the room restlessly.)

ZEGOCINA. (Weeping) The old cheat! After so many assurances, so many oaths!--Didn't I waste my finest years with him--marry him, misled by his position? And what pleasures did I have? I saved every penny, even did without proper food! I was the best of wives--a sister of charity, you might say--and this is how he left me!

NOTARY. (Absorbed in thought) Hm! This alters the



state of affairs. You have--eh--eh--eh--only the right to a fourth part of the estate.--Pan Damazy will receive all.

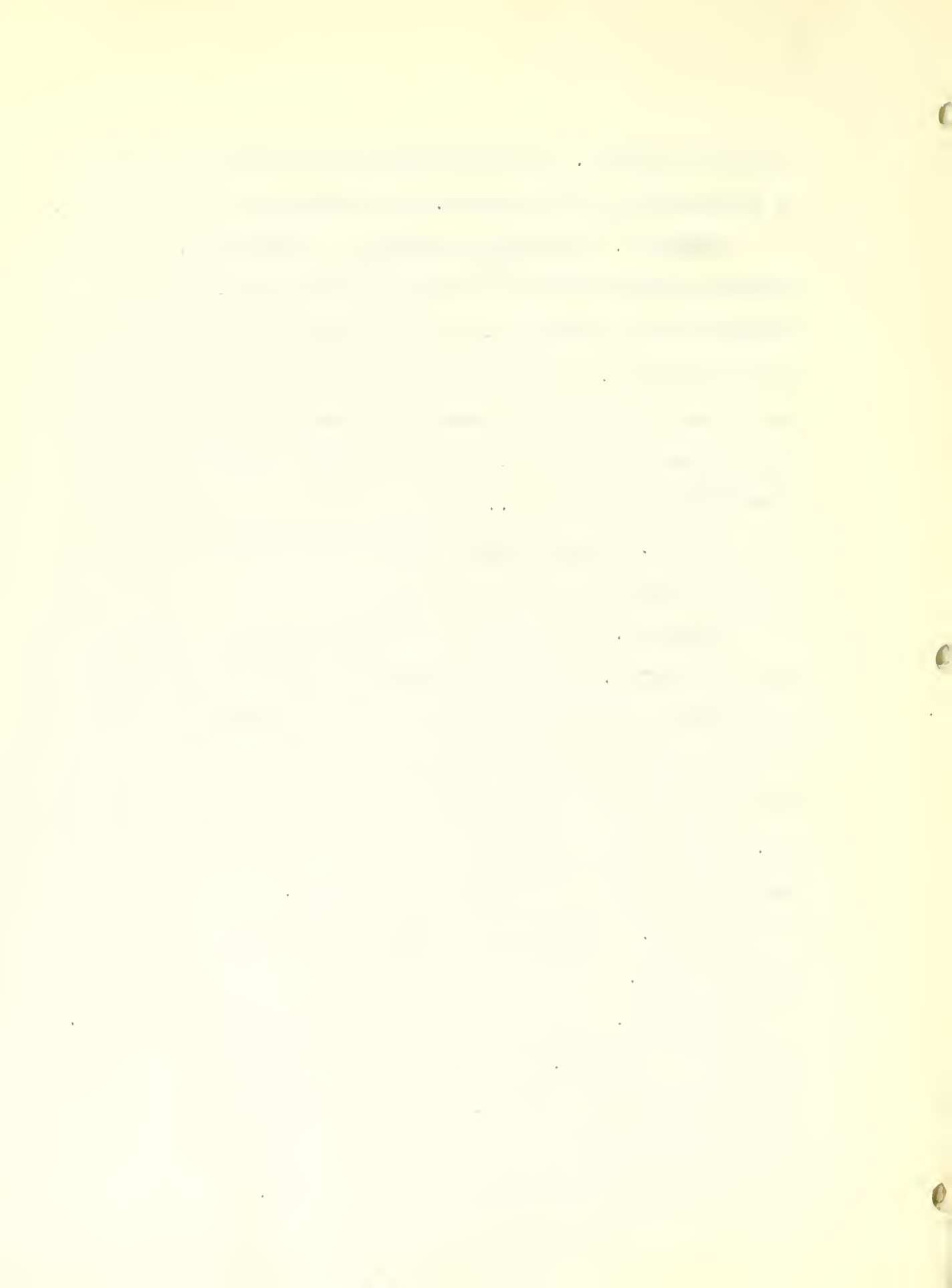
ZEGOCINA. (Prattling volubly) Pan Damazy, who was always at odds with my deceased husband, who, when his brother was to marry me, was not ashamed to dissuade him from the union, because of dirty self-interest, painting me in the blackest colors--me, who married a man considerably older than myself, though I didn't even demand any *marriage settlement*....
~~assignment of property....~~

NOTARY. (As before) Indeed, your disinterestedness at that time--

ZEGOCINA. (As before) Fortunately the intrigue was not successful.--My husband quarreled for this reason with his brother, although there was a time, when, deceived by his advice, he wanted to break the engagement and demanded that I return his first wife's diamonds, which he had given me.--But our dear brother miscalculated! I was obstinate, and I refused to give back the diamonds!

NOTARY. (Ironically) And in that manner the marriage came to pass.

ZEGOCINA. In spite of his wretched brother's plots!-- Oh, he is a plotter!--You would not believe how he plotted! And besides, he's a boor, a poverty-stricken squire, brought up behind the stove; you would stop up your ears if he began to tell any of those funny stories of his.--Just imagine,



he wasn't even at the funeral! And now he makes the excuse that he received my letter only a week after the ceremony. Is that my fault? Let him blame the postoffice, that his letter was so late.

NOTARY. To tell the truth--eh--eh--eh--in such an event, it would have been fitting to let him know by special messenger.

ZEGOCINA. Notary! Do not accuse me! (Emphatically) At such a time! When the hand of God struck me down with such a dreadful calamity! Could I help losing my head?

NOTARY. One should never lose his head. (After a moment) What do you intend to do now?

ZEGOCINA. Sit down, my dear notary, and listen to me. (They sit down.) But first of all, tell me, do you consider me greedy?

NOTARY. My dear lady--ch--eh--ch--everyone, in spite of God's Commandments, wishes himself better than his fellow-creatures.--If that is a fault, it is shared by all people. Nevertheless, there are occasions--

ZEGOCINA. Do you mean to tell me, that I could live comfortably on what the law assigns to me?

NOTARY. Hm--one's idea of a comfortable life depends on wants and habits.

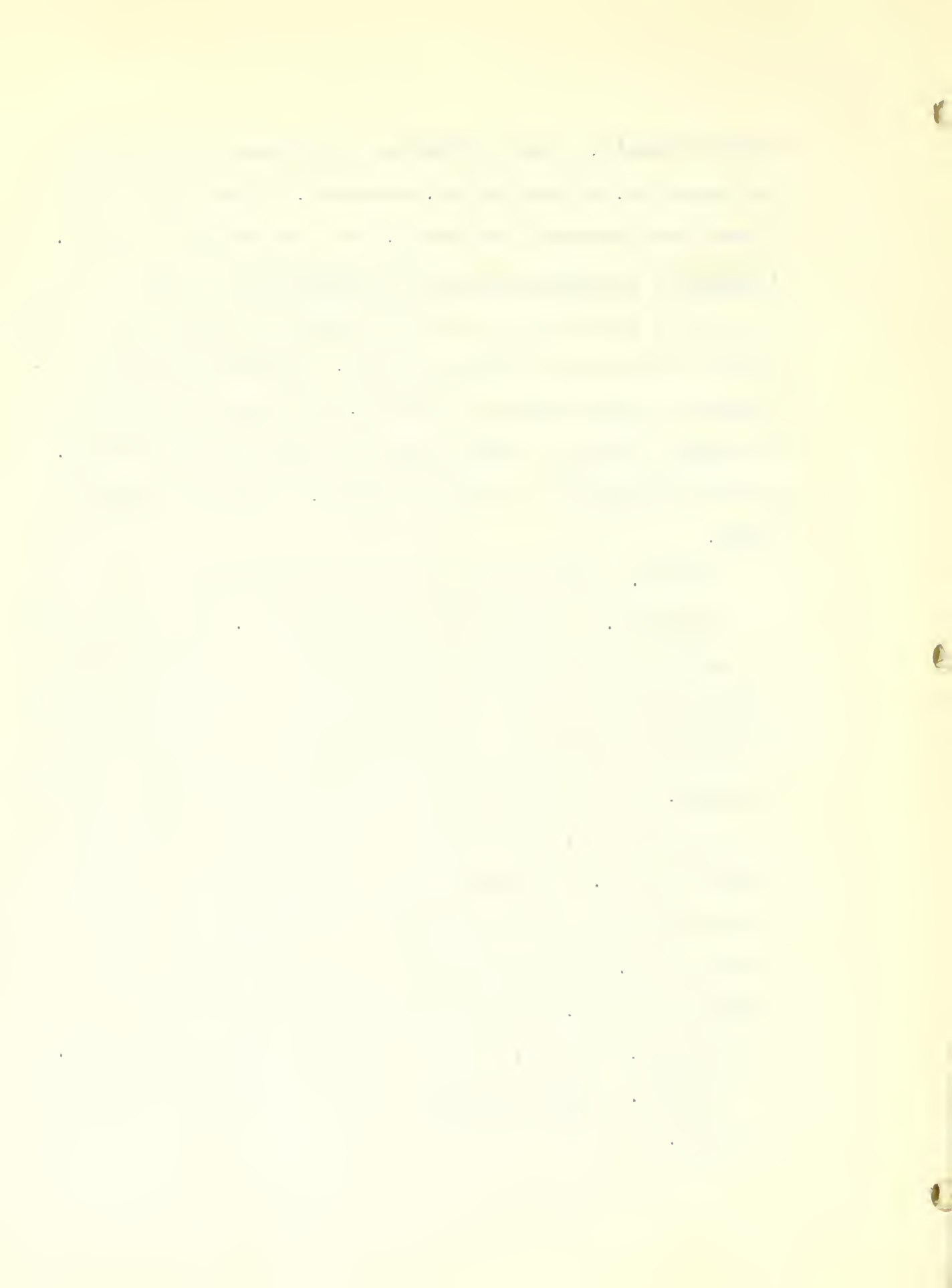
ZEGOCINA. Oh, if anyone, notary, is accustomed to comfort, I am, and I must have some needs. My husband, who

loved me madly, never refused me anything--he fondled me, he obeyed me, he spoiled me.--However, if you think that I want this fortune for myself, you are greatly mistaken. (Gradually growing more and more emotional) Having wasted the finest years of my life with a man for whom I sacrificed myself, growing old before my time, I should have been contented with the slightest trinket, and after I had offered my wrongs to God, I should have withdrawn from the world. But I am thinking of my dear Seweryn, of my own sister's child.

NOTARY. And--eh--eh--eh--the other one--

ZEGOCINA. I must explain this foible. My sister loved and married a man who did not know how to appreciate her; although he appeared to love her madly, he did not hesitate to sacrifice her for a fancied obligation. All his deeds were mad, and at last he fled abroad, cutting off any possibility of return, and leaving his wife and his two sons almost in want. (Resuming her former tone) My husband, who loved me madly, was so honorable that he undertook the care of my family. When my sister died soon after, he sent Antoni to school, and later helped him to take over a farm; the younger, Seweryn, we took into our house to bring up.

NOTARY. (Indifferently) That was very--eh--eh--eh--laudable.



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ZEGOCINA. If, in the supposition that I should survive my husband, I ever desired this estate, God will not attribute it to my greed, for it was for that dear boy, who loves me as his own mother--(Dramatically) Notary, have mercy, if not on me, then on dear Seweryn!

NOTARY (Aside) Dear Seweryn, always dear Seweryn!-- (Aloud) I confess to you that--eh--eh--eh--if I could find any means whatever, I should be much happier, without boasting, to do what I can for you, rather than for that youth. But I do not understand, under the circumstances, what I--

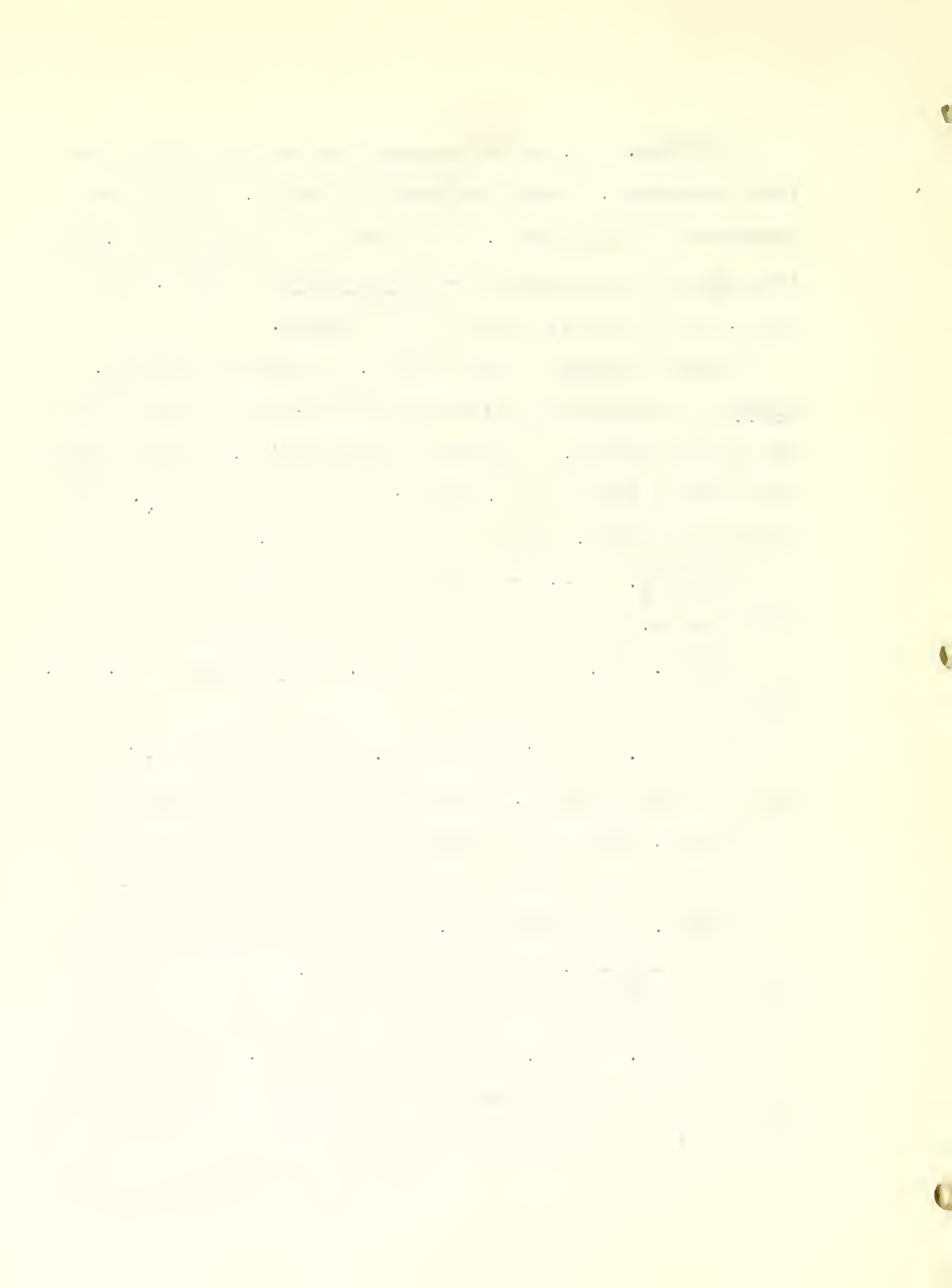
ZEGOCINA. Ah--for I have not told you anything yet-- listen to me. Pan Damazy has an only daughter...

NOTARY. So, he has a daughter.--(To himself) Hm! Hm! Genio might be able to--

ZEGOCINA. This is how it is. My husband, who, in spite of disagreements, used to have moments of weakness for his brother, often expressed the desire that Seweryn marry her, so that the property should be left in the family...

NOTARY. Not a bad idea! If no obstacle should present itself--eh--eh--eh--on either side--for, as far as compulsion is concerned--

ZEGOCINA. There, I am counting on you. Try to keep Pan Damazy as long as possible in darkness concerning the will; he is a simple man, he will not inquire into the



state of affairs, and will certainly agree when I offer him an income from a certain part of the estate, ^{bequeathing} assigning the rest to him after my death.

NOTARY. (Rising, distracted) Hm, hm, I can speak about it with him, sound him out.--I will go on purpose.

ZEGOCINA. (Rising) You won't need to, you will meet him here.

NOTARY. I think that it would be better here^{!!!}.

ZEGOCINA. I have invited him to visit me, thereby taking the first step to reconciliation.

NOTARY. (Excitedly) You have invited him? Oh!--
(Aside) This isn't to my taste.

ZEGOCINA. They should arrive today, for I sent the horses a couple of days ago.

NOTARY. Today!

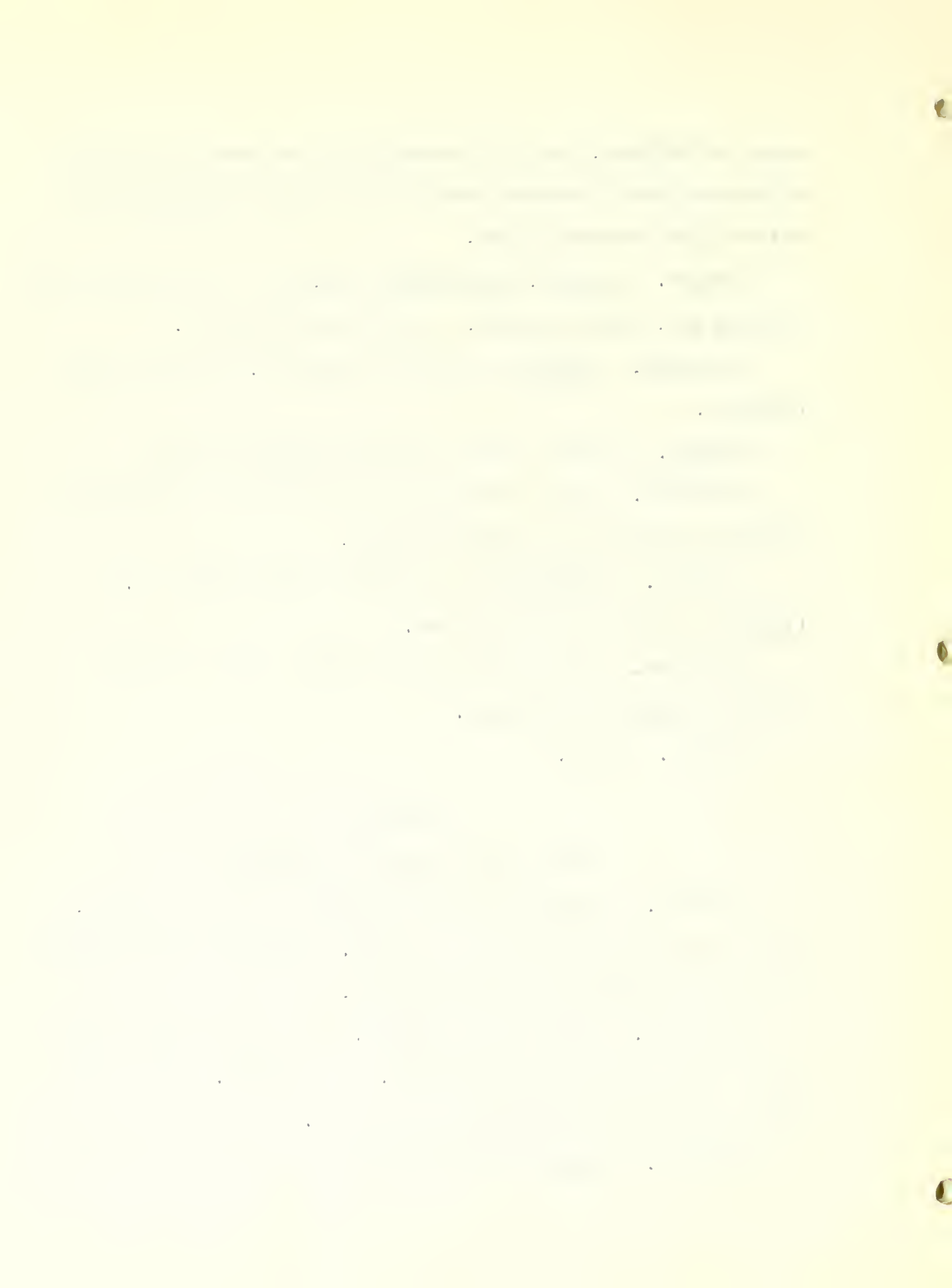
SCENE IX

The NOTARY, ZEGOCINA, SEWERYN

SEWERYN. (Coming in from the rear) They are coming.-- You can see the carriage on the bank. (He goes to the window on the right with an indifferent air.)

ZEGOCINA. Oh, they are coming! My dear notary, do not desert me in this decisive moment. Listen now! (She leads him to one side and whispers in his ear.)

SEWERYN. (Aside) Whatever they are plotting up their



sleeve, it doesn't please me at all.

NOTARY. My dear benefactress, the idea itself is--
eh--eh--eh--certainly commendable. But I confess, without
boasting, that my moments are precious.--The business cannot
be settled in a few words.--My profession is that of a notary.--
I have today several transactions to which I must attend.

ZEGOCINA. I won't let you go! Come here, let us come
to an understanding first, before I go to meet them.--Oh,
how my heart is beating! (Clasping her hands) Notary, I
can't get along without you! Oh! They are coming.

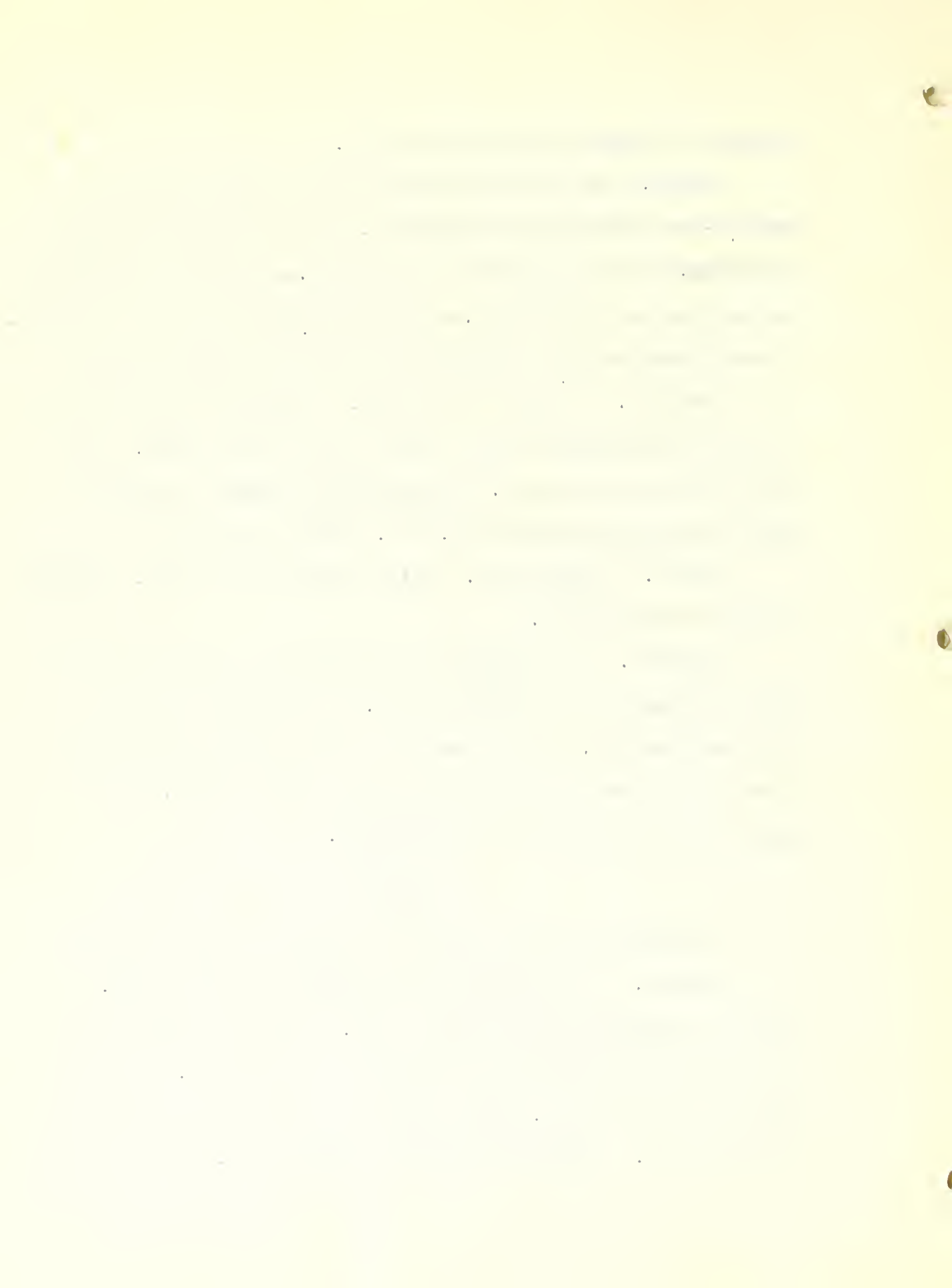
NOTARY. (Aside) Ha! We'll play our own game. (Aloud)
I am at your service.

ZEGOCINA. (To Seweryn) My angel boy, meet them here--
have them make themselves at home. Be polite, please; I
will explain why.--Tell them that I am a little indisposed,
that as soon as I am dressed, I will come to them. (She
goes out with the NOTARY at the left.)

SCENE X

SEWERYN; a moment later PAN DAMAZY, HELENA, ANTONI

SEWERYN. They surely have something between them.
(After a moment, at the window) Aha! Antoni has escorted
the two; he is helping his goddess to alight--ha! ha!--She
jumps out like a kid,--it's plain that she never rode in a
coach before. (Going to the door at the rear) I must wel-



come them.

ANTONI. (Conducting the new-comers in) Permit me, my dear sir, I will take your wrap--(To HELENA) and yours also. (He helps her take it off)--and your hat? (He takes it.)

DAMAZY. (A bald-headed country squire with an abundant grizzled mustache, the rest of his face clean-shaven, and with a porcelain pipe in his hand) Bless my soul, where is my sister-in-law?

SEWERYN. (Bowing) She is in her room, somewhat indisposed.

DAMAZY. And you are Pan Seweryn, if I am not mistaken.

SEWERYN. (With self-assurance) Indeed, you are not mistaken.

DAMAZY. I recognized you, my amorous young gentleman, at once, although we have seen each other only a single time, bless my soul.

SEWERYN. (Aside, offended) Amorous gentleman!

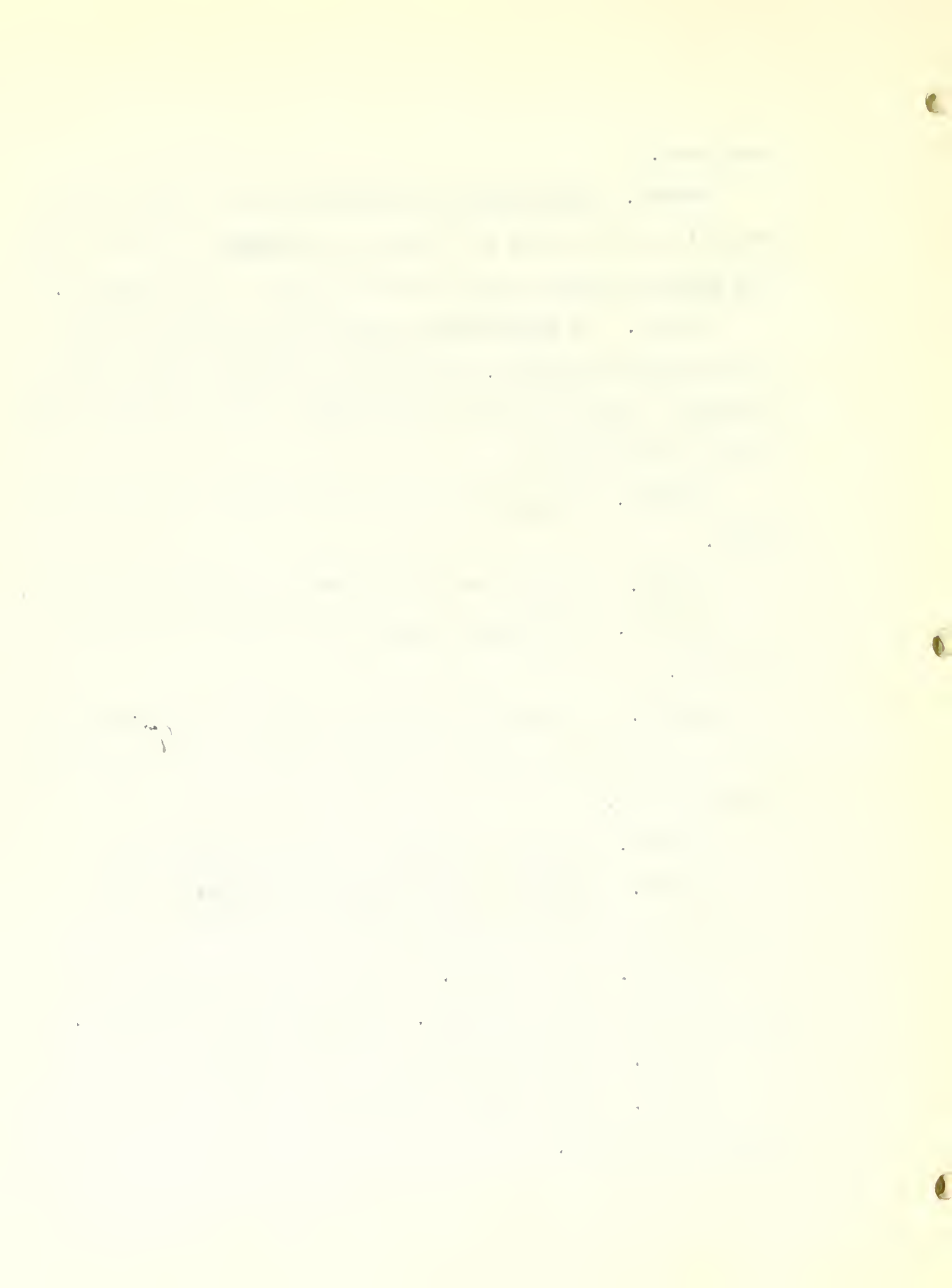
ANTONI. (Who had been talking with HELENA) What's the matter? Is auntie indisposed?

SEWERYN. So it seems. I will find out immediately and tell her of your arrival. (He goes out at the left.)

HELENA. Dear papa, was that Pan Seweryn?

DAMAZY. What, didn't you recognize him? Why, he's been at our house.

HELENA. *That was so long ago.*



ANTONI. (To HELENA) I've been expecting you since early morning, counting the minutes, and I went impatiently out to meet you on the pretext of hunting.

HELENA. If you only knew how my heart was beating while we were ~~coming~~, *on the way.*

ANTONI. (In a low tone) And mine too, when I saw your father and you in the distance.

HELENA. But when I caught sight of you, I was reassured right away. (Jokingly) Somehow under such protection I acquired courage.

ANTONI. (As before) Oh, my precious!

HELENA. Hush! What's this again? Daddy will hear-- (Beginning to chatter) How charming it is here in auntie's house!

DAMAZY. (Who has been combing his bald head, passes her the comb) Here, take it, arrange your own hair, for *it* ~~you~~ look^s like a mop.

HELENA. (To Antoni, with a smile) Is that true? Well, don't look at me, please turn your back. (She goes to the mirror.)

ANTONI. I'll not bother you. (Taking the wraps) I'll take these in the meantime to your rooms, and see if they have everything ready. (He goes out at the left.)



SCENE XI

PAN DAMAZY, HELENA

DAMAZY. I don't know, bless my soul, how my sister-in-law happened to get so affectionate that she invited us to her home, and sent for us with such pomp.

HELENA. That was a coach, daddy, wasn't it?

DAMAZY. To the devil with her and her coach! We should have got here just the same in our own carriage.--But there's something behind it--it's not for nothing.

HELENA. (At the window) What a darling garden there is here!

DAMAZY. More show, than use, bless my soul.--I should prefer an orchard.

HELENA. Why?

DAMAZY. (Impatiently) Just because it's an orchard!

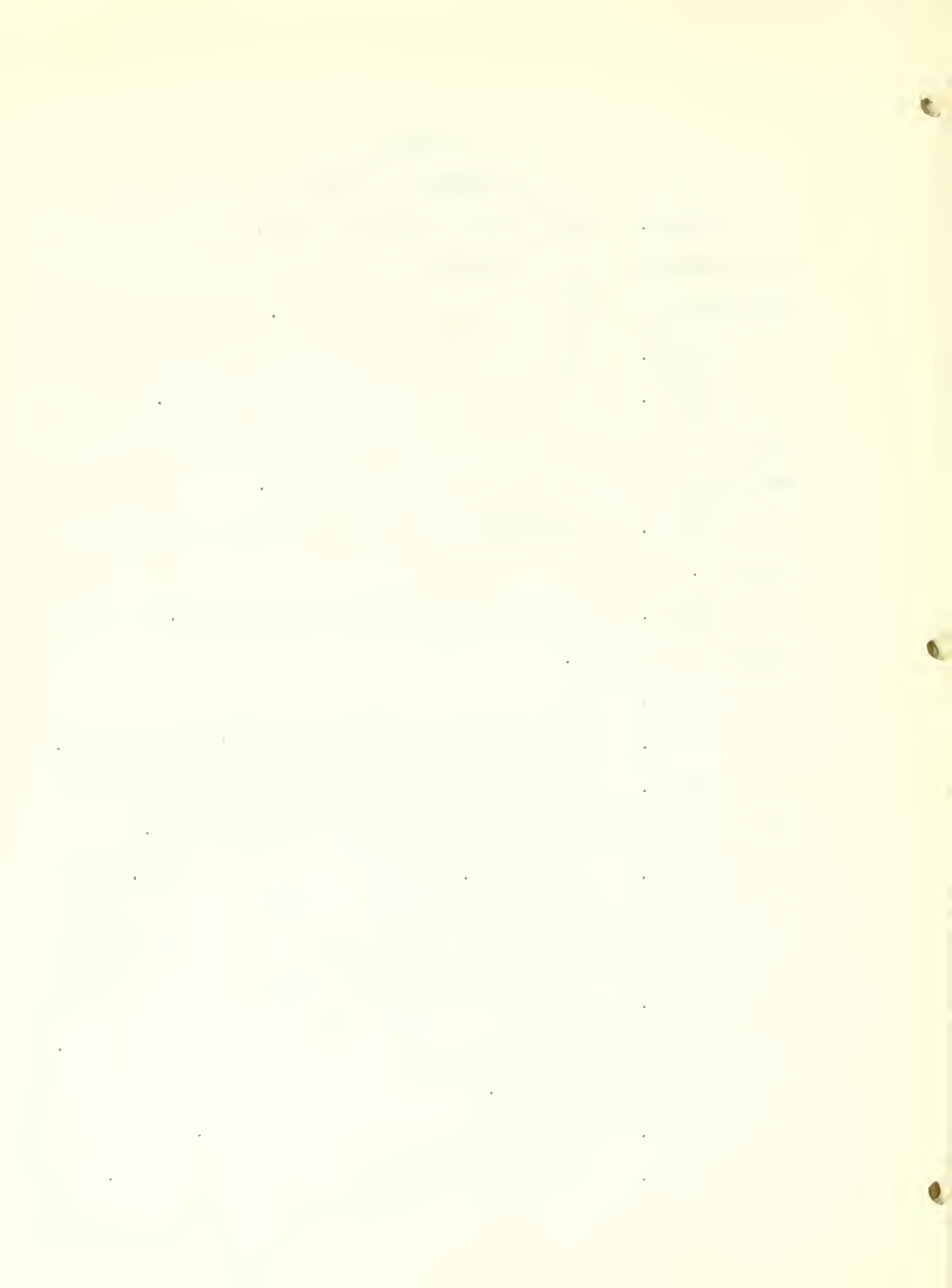
HELENA. But here it is so pretty; these flower beds. What nightingales there must be here in the spring!

DAMAZY. Oh, you bet! There's no lack of them. When they begin to screech in the night, each louder than the other, bless my soul, then they won't let you sleep.

HELENA. Ah, daddy, how can you talk so? Nightingales sing so beautifully; I could listen to them my whole life. (She snuggles up to him.)

DAMAZY. Because you're queer in the head.

HELENA. Because it's so beautiful, so beautiful!--



Oh,Heavens!--

DAMAZY. (Looking at her from under his eyes, and clearing his throat to hide his emotion) Hm, hm. She's the very image of her mother. (After a moment, petting her) You used to run ^{halter-skalter} ~~and run~~ through these flower beds when you were a little tot.

HELENA. I scarcely remember it, as if it were a dream.

DAMAZY. After your uncle married again everything changed--our visits were cut short.

HELENA. Why, daddy dear?

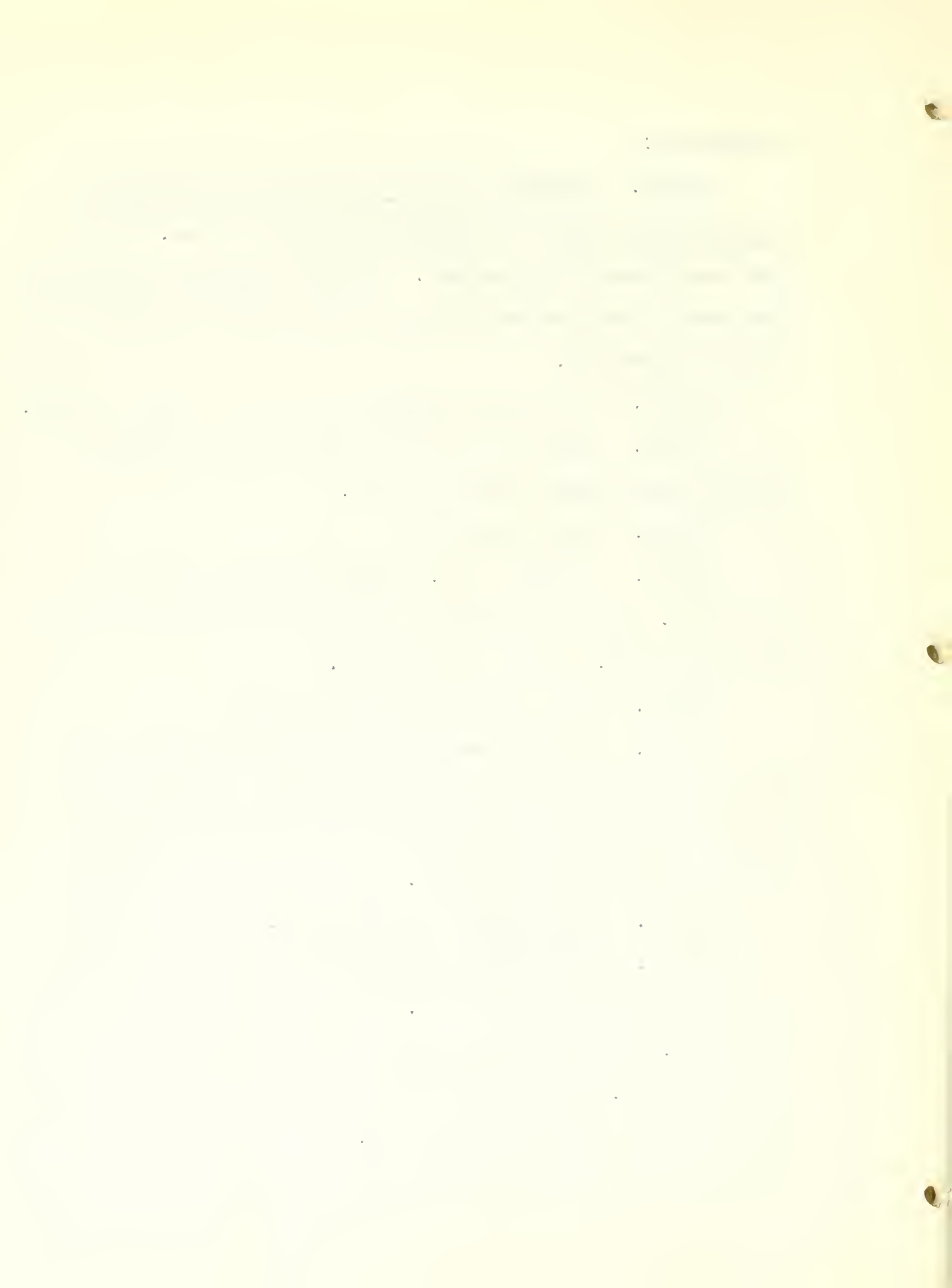
DAMAZY. (Testily) Oh!, ^hHow you bore me with those questions! Always why? why? You know yourself well enough the reason why. Because he married!

HELENA. Then is auntie really so bad?

DAMAZY. Oh, when she feels like it, you could twist her around your finger, sweet as honey; but just grind her up into powder in a mortar, and, bless my soul, you could poison half the world with it.

HELENA. (Laughing) Oh, daddy dear!

DAMAZY. Well, what about daddy? Daddy knows people, and that's all there is to it. Ho, ho! She is a sharp character. She had her husband entirely under her thumb, bless my soul. What sort of a life he had with her, may the good Lord shield me from such! And then he had to be so stupid as to make a joint will, although he was about



twenty years older. If he hadn't, the whole estate would have fallen to us, since they didn't have any children--
(After a moment) But what's the use of telling about that?
(Pacing the room, aside) If I regret it, it's only because of this orphan.

HELENA. Why have you grown so sad, daddy dear?

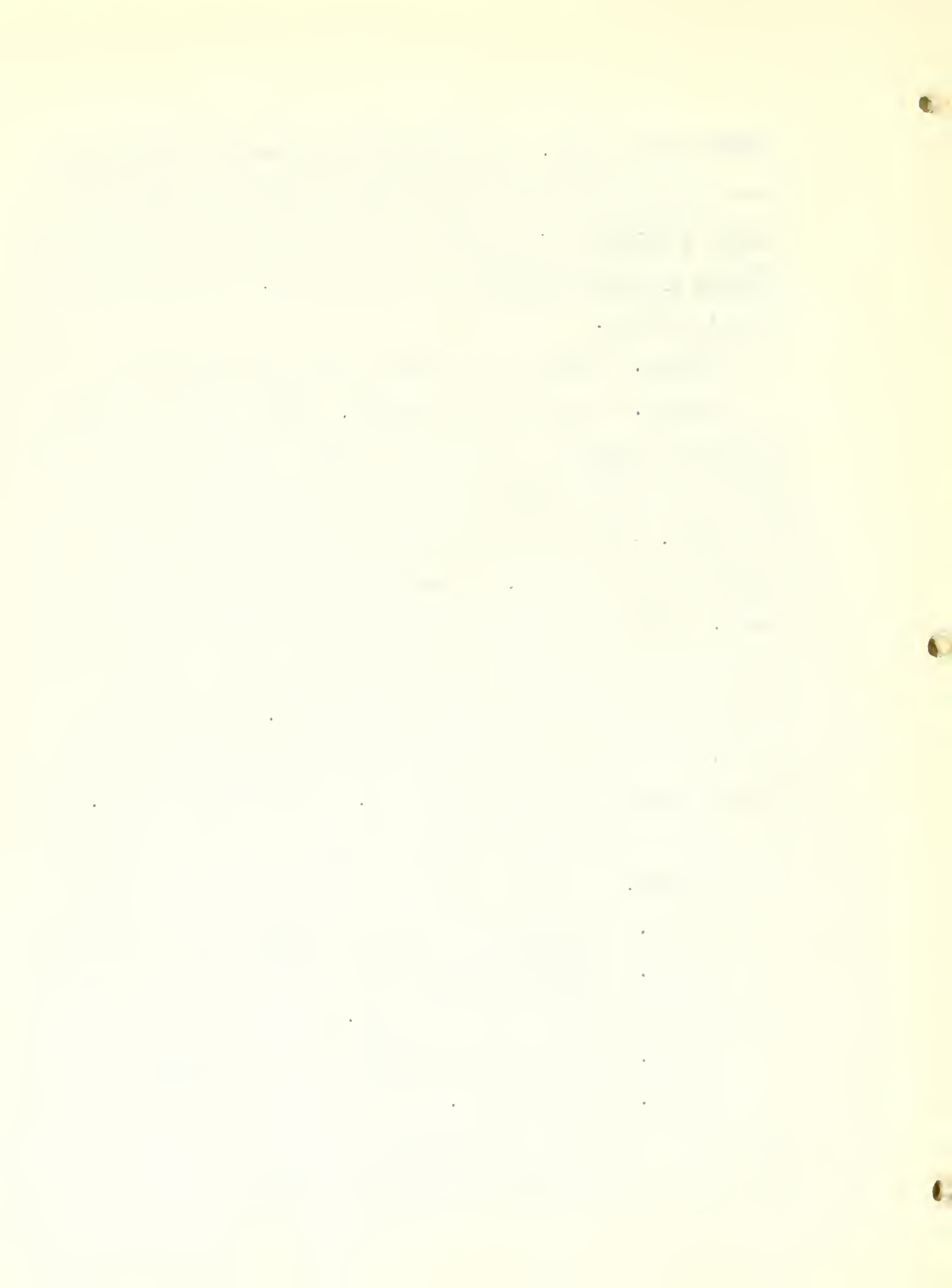
DAMAZY. Let me alone, please. "Why" again? (After a moment, roughly) Listen, just make a good appearance for my sake, so that they won't say you were brought up behind the stove.--Speak up, hold your head high, be careful to be polite with your aunt, but without humbling yourself in the least. Bless my soul, she'd be likely to get the idea that she had only to beckon, and we'd come on our knees here, in *the* ^{rofe} ~~view~~ of obtaining some benefits from her. They'd come in handy, all right, but if she should have the idea that I'd kiss her paw for it, no thank you! But Antoni is here! It's just occurred to me: *Who* knows whether this invitation is not of his doing!

HELENA. (Confused) I doubt it,--why should he now--?

DAMAZY. (Looking at her) What, you don't think so? Eh, Helena, my love, don't pretend.

HELENA. (Very much confused) But am I pretending?

DAMAZY. Oh, be quiet! I am too old, you understand, not to see through it,--(Roughly) So then, how do you stand with him? Eh? (Seeing that she is silent, more roughly)



I'd like to know! He calls nearly every day, hangs around, and you don't either take him or send him packing. That state of affairs don't suit me! Tell me plainly, how do you feel towards him?

HELENA. (Aside) Oh, heavens! Daddy is cross again!

DAMAZY. Do you like him or don't you?

HELENA. Pan Antoni?

DAMAZY. (Impatiently) There you are again! Who am I asking about!

HELENA. (Shamefaced) My heavens, how should I know?

DAMAZY. (As before) Is that so? If you don't know, then go ask somebody!

HELENA. I love only my dear daddy.

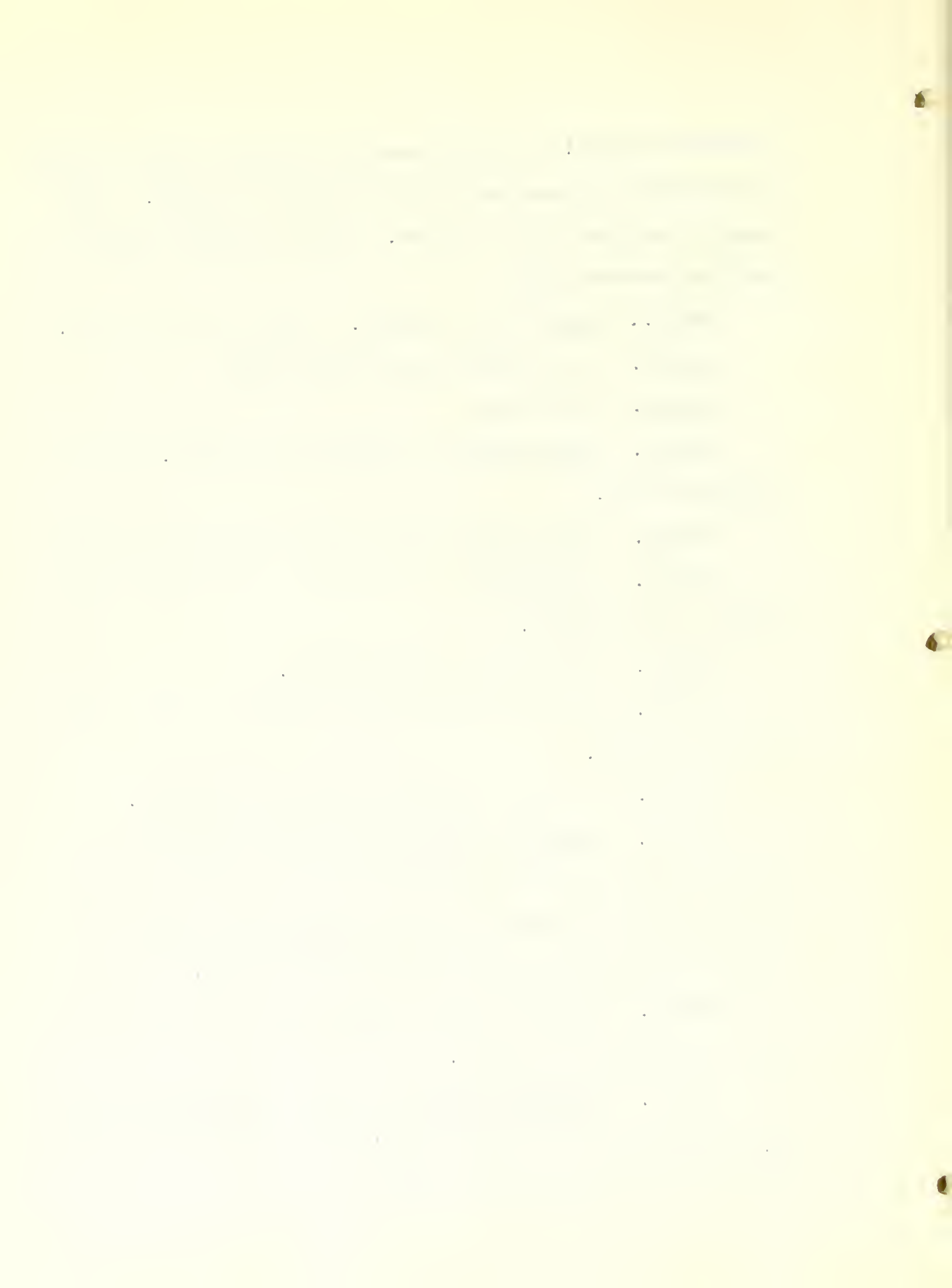
DAMAZY. Now don't wheedle me, please, I don't need it-- that's not nice!

HELENA. You get so excited, daddy, right away.

DAMAZY. (Somewhat mollified) But who wouldn't get excited, with a child like you. You put me off with this or that, but I, however,--(Looking her in the eyes) I've noticed that you are always glad when he comes.

HELENA. Well, why not, I should like to know, daddy? He is so gay, and pleasant.

DAMAZY. (Slipping his hand under her chin and looking into her eyes) And when you don't see him for a long time, you are out of sorts, eh? Isn't that so?



HELENA. (At a loss) Oh, heavens, I don't know myself.
You are drawing it out of me, word by word.

DAMAZY. Well, ^{I must say,} ~~on my word,~~ she's a fine one! (Impatiently)
Tell me, what do you call it, that whenever you expect him,
you go from window to window watching for him?--I've seen
you many a time.

HELENA. (Lowering her eyes) If anyone promises to come
to dinner, he shouldn't make you wait for him until evening.

DAMAZY. Well, then it's evident you long for him, and
that's that. So why talk about it any more!

HELENA. (Almost in tears) But there you are again!--
You say right off that I long for him.--You're persecuting me
so, daddy.

DAMAZY. (Pacing the room, aside) Eh! She's still a
stupid child; she don't know herself how she feels. We must
wait, apparently! Her time hasn't come yet.

SCENE XII

SEWERYN comes in at the left, PAN DAMAZY paces the room. HELENA
stands at the window, pensive.

SEWERYN. ^(To C. Aside) Well, so I am to pay attention to this little
wren.--That's good, after the way I ragged Antoni.--How it'll
go, I'm sure I don't know--the worst is, what'll he say about
it? Ha!--I must wade right in. (Aloud) Auntie will be at
your service presently--but perhaps you would like to go to
your rooms first.

DAMAZY. It's all one to me--but Helena--(In a low tone) Perhaps you should change your dress, for this one seems too tight for you. You must make a good appearance, bless my soul, so that they won't make any remarks about us.-- Dress up, do you hear!--a plain fence post polished up would be more graceful than you. (To SEWERYN) Where are those rooms?

SEWERYN. I will conduct you. (To HELENA, offering his arm) May I have the honor? (She draws back.)

HELENA. (In her father's ear) Daddy, he wants to take my arm.

DAMAZY. My love, don't disgrace me.

SEWERYN. (Aside) She jumped back as if I'd scalded her.

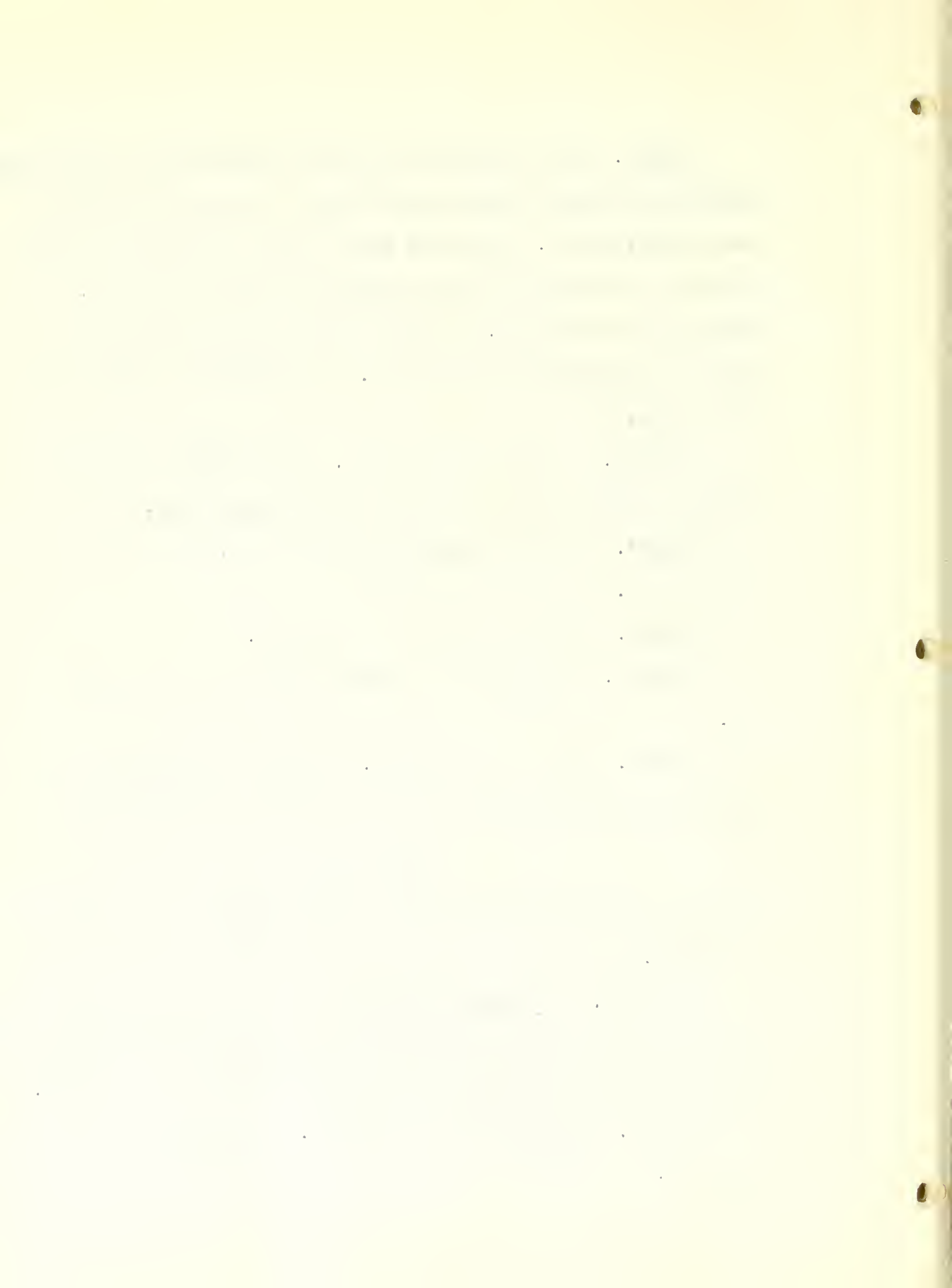
DAMAZY. Now, you go first. (Aside, contentedly) That shows her bringing-up, the girl is as well-trained as--

SCENE XIII

The same with ZEGOCINA and the NOTARY, who come in from the left.

ZEGOCINA. (Leaning on the NOTARY, comes in slowly, with her handkerchief at her eyes; she approaches DAMAZY, and leans her head on his shoulder, tearfully) Brother, my brother!

DAMAZY. (Aside) What the deuce! (Uneasily) Now I'm done for!



ZEGOCINA. I did not expect that your arrival, the sight of you, would bring back so vividly before my eyes the loss that I have suffered.

DAMAZY. (Kissing her hand) Well, it's not my fault, bless my soul.

ZEGOCINA. Ah, did I say that? On the contrary, I am thankful to my brother; these tears are a consolation.

DAMAZY. Hm, hm.

ZEGOCINA. We lived together so many years--they passed for us like a single day--for ^{my late husband} the deceased loved me madly.

DAMAZY. Hm, hm. (SEWERYN, who has been exchanging a few ceremonious words with HELENA, goes out at the left.)

ZEGOCINA. Ah, that moment is always present in my mind when, on the bed of pain, already expiring, he troubled himself about my future. He could not speak then, but with his eyes he bade me farewell.--Ah! I shall not forget that look!

DAMAZY. (Moved) Did he suffer much?

ZEGOCINA. In the last few weeks particularly. I tried to soften his sufferings as much as possible. (After a short silence, with emphasis) But let the subject rest, let us not ^{spoil by} ~~brand~~ with sadness these moments of our reunion. (To HELENA) I am glad to renew our acquaintance, and, God grant, to have closer relations with Helena. (Kissing her) How charmingly she has grown up! I should wish you, dearest,



to like it so well here that you ^{might} ~~may~~ not get homesick.

(Turning to DAMAZY and the NOTARY) Certainly you gentlemen know each other.

DAMAZY. Bless my soul, I have not the pleasure.

NOTARY. (Cordially extending his hand) What! Notary Bajdalski.

DAMAZY. There is something about that name--but I cannot recall.

NOTARY. The friend, without boasting, of your deceased brother.

DAMAZY. I had no communication with my brother for such a long time--except at rare intervals--although it was not my fault, bless my soul. (ZEGOCINA, aside, is conversing with HELENA.)

NOTARY. But notwithstanding that, we know each other--eh--eh--eh.--Oh yes--you sold some wool to Mortek in Tatarów.

DAMAZY. I sell to him every year.

NOTARY. That's it, I was present at one of those transactions, which took place in Ikey's shop. Later we drank a bottle of wine.

DAMAZY. (Trying to remember) Oh, true enough, true enough. (They fall in each other's arms.) But what a memory for places you have, bless my soul, for I myself can remember nothing at all of it.

NOTARY. Oh, my dear sir, when once I see somebody, I never forget him.



DAMAZY. (Aside) When was it? Blow my brains out, I don't remember. (MANKA comes in, and whispers to ZEGOCINA; they and HELENA look at one another curiously.)

ZEGOCINA. All right, all right. (To DAMAZY) If you will be so kind, brother, as to come with me: after the journey you all must make yourselves comfortable--and rest--- Come, Helena, my love.--(She takes her by the arm.)

DAMAZY. At your service. (To the NOTARY, stopping before the door) But I beg your pardon, bless my soul, now I seem to recollect. (Decidedly) You were not the one that time at Ikey's shop.

NOTARY. Not I?

DAMAZY. It was our district notary, Glowacz--therefore it must have been somewhere else.

NOTARY. Perhaps, I do not recall the details myself--but I know that we are acquainted, only it is evident that my commonplace features have not stuck in your memory.

DAMAZY. On the contrary, bless my soul, such features as you have are unforgettable; they are not commonplace features. That makes me all the more amazed.

NOTARY. You flatter me. (At the door) Please--

DAMAZY. But nevertheless, you have something in your face--(Ceremoniously) Oh, will you be good enough to--

NOTARY. I am like one of the household here, sir.

DAMAZY. But pardon me, wasn't it once in Kolkowice at the fair? I was buying oxen then.



NOTARY. That's ~~just it, just it,~~ *exactly! exactly!*

DAMAZY. And so you see, I knew after all that it wasn't at Ikey's shop. (They go out at the left.)

SCENE XIV

MANKA, later SEWERYN

MANKA. (With a sad smile) And they treat me as if I were not here; as if I did not exist at all for them. (After a moment) I do not know why, but I feel some sort of fear; my heart is in my mouth, as if with the arrival of these guests it anticipated something disagreeable. A moment ago, when I met Seweryn, I spoke to him; he did not answer, and went straight on. He apparently was pretending he did not see me. What has come over him! He used to-- (SEWERYN comes in from the rear; not seeing MANKA, he paces thoughtfully up and down the room.)

MANKA. (Drawing near him, and looking inquiringly into his eyes) What is this cloud on your forehead?

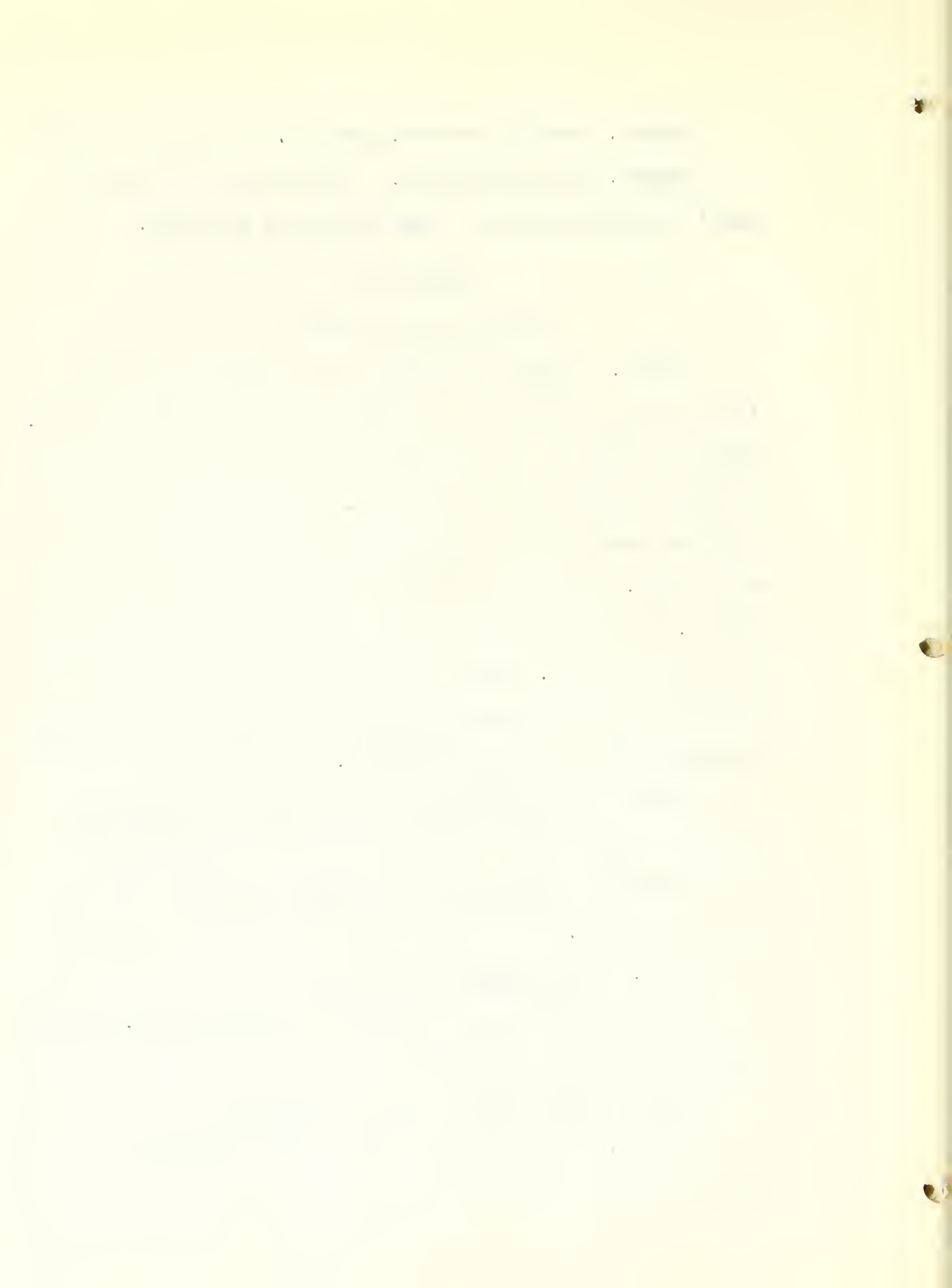
SEWERYN. (Takes her hand, after a moment) The moment has come.

MANKA. (Nervously) What moment?

SEWERYN. The moment in which we need courage.--Manka, answer me, do you love me?

MANKA. (As before) Why this question?

SEWERYN. Do you believe that I have the best ^{of} intentions ^{in regard to} for you? Tell me!



MANKA. (Bitterly) How should I know, how can I be certain, when you yourself do not know?

SEWERYN. (Ardently) My dear girl, if I were a common sort of man, I should be convinced that you have been aided by witchery.--I should not be able to live without you. I feel it now for the first time.

MANKA. Why for the first time?

SEWERYN. Manka, listen to me and reflect well upon what I tell you. We can be enviably happy, if you will only consent to understand me and my position, and not have unreasonable scruples.

MANKA. (Astonished) Scruples?

SEWERYN. If you will only get rid of those idle fancies, so impossible to realize.

MANKA. What are my fancies? They concern your own heart. Can I be mistaken?

SEWERYN. Oh, that heart is yours and always will be.

MANKA. Well, then what?

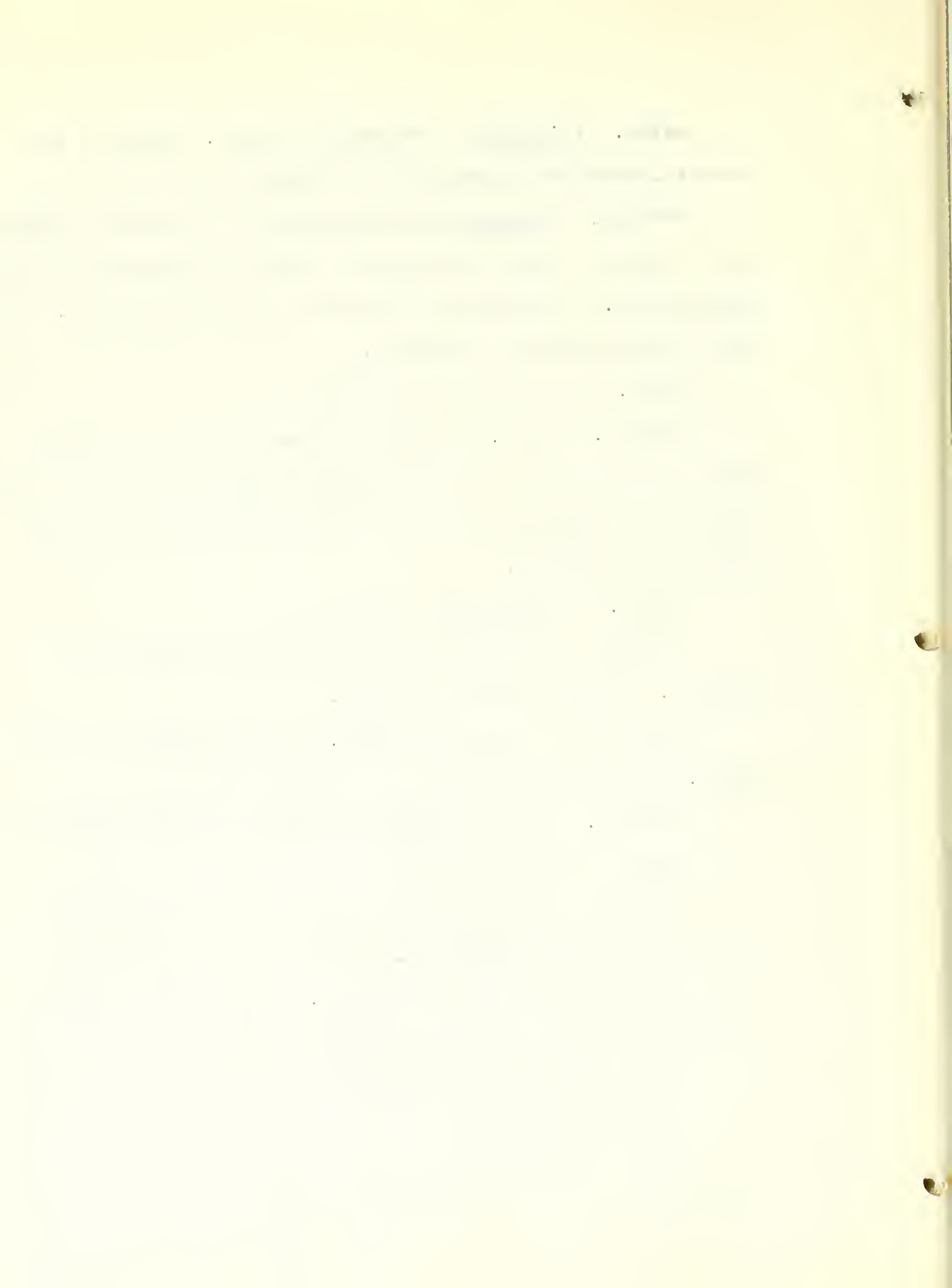
SEWERYN. (After a moment) Our whole happiness depended upon our independence, on my freeing myself from this guardianship that oppresses me.--And for that, there is only one means. (After a moment) Manka, I must marry.

MANKA. (Not comprehending) What's that? Whom?

SEWERYN. Think.

MANKA. Ah!--(After a moment, in an unnatural voice)

Ha! ha! ha!



SEWERYN. You are laughing?

MANKA. (Struggling with her tears) What should I do?

SEWERYN. Manka darling!

MANKA. No, you are just trying to test me--to prove me. Confess now!

SEWERYN. My child, be sensible.

MANKA. (Bursting into tears) I cannot survive this!

SEWERYN. Crying and sobbing again!

MANKA. I am not crying--no! (She presses her hands to her breast) But my heart, my heart!

SEWERYN. Manka, dearest darling, I swear to you on all I hold most sacred, that I love you only--and that you will be the happiest--

MANKA. Ah! (Restraining her tears) How little you must fear God to say that.--(She withdraws from him.)

SEWERYN. Manka! do not drive me to extremities--(The NOTARY comes in at the left.) Listen! Don't cry, you will be a lady. I will not spare anything for you.

MANKA. Leave me alone!--You have no mercy. (She goes out at the right.)

SEWERYN. Manka! (He goes out after her.)

SCENE XV

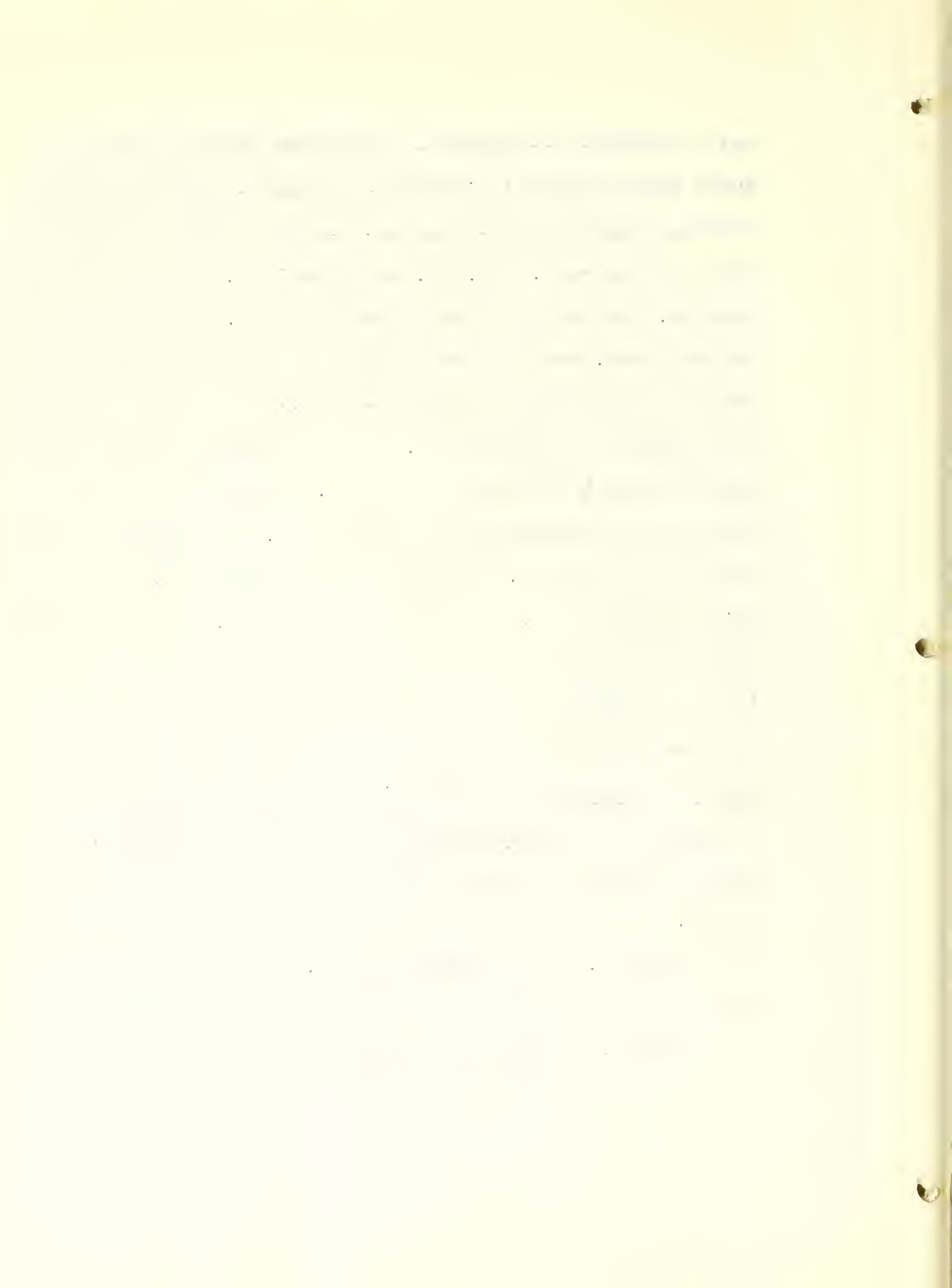
The NOTARY, alone; later SEWERYN

NOTARY. (In a sing-song voice) Hm, hm, hm!--Hm, hm, hm!--
They say that of all creatures man alone has a soul; the rest

only--eh--eh--eh--instinct. Who knows which is better?--
Every beast obeys his instinct--but man?--Neither instinct
nor that inward voice--eh--eh--eh--which they call the
voice of the soul. Ho, ho, my young lord, with your per-
mission, you're up to some rascally trick.--They want you
to marry one, and you are trying to seduce the other--and
shall I sign my name to that?--Oh no!--I am a man of honor,
who travels a straight path.--I'll telegraph instantly to
Genio; he must be here by tomorrow.--The girl is a rich
match; for whatever the old woman says, Pan Damazy has the
right to the estate.--(He sits down at the desk.) I'll
write the telegram. Genio is a positivist, so he'll under-
stand things practically and know what to do about it.--
(After a moment) But maybe that was only jesting--I don't
know how far things are advanced with them. (He goes to
the door through which they disappeared and looks through
the key-hole; at that moment the door opens suddenly,
hitting him in the nose; SEWERYN comes in, very much dis-
turbed.)

SEWERYN. (In a furious voice, stopping suddenly)
What were you doing at the door?

NOTARY. (Holding his nose) Eh--eh--eh--



ACT II

The garden; at the left an arbor, in which there are a table and chairs: on the right, a bench: in the background a wall or fence with a little gate in the center.

SCENE I

PAN DAMAZY is pacing up and down, smoking his pipe; MANKA is standing with lowered eyes and folded hands; HELENA comes in later.

DAMAZY. Hm, hm, I did not know anything of it, bless my soul; I confess that it had left my mind completely. From the time of that stupid marriage of my brother, I didn't visit him once. So you say that they have kept you at a distance.

MANKA. They did me no injustice, but mistress treated me as she would a stranger.

DAMAZY. (Testily) Mistress, mistress, why do you call her mistress?--After all she is your aunt--of course, I don't know to what degree--but your aunt nevertheless. After all I and my deceased brother were--^{if}Wait--Anselm married, bless my soul, Aunt Balbina, and if we called her aunt, well, she must have been an aunt. The own sister of Anselm--now! Bless my soul, Anselm's sister married Paterkowski, and he was your father, wasn't he?

MANKA. That is my name.

DAMAZY. So you see now--there is a relationship--and



close enough, too.--Call me uncle, will you please, my dear--what's your name?

MANKA. Manka.

DAMAZY. What does Manka stand for? I don't get that.

MANKA. Marya.

DAMAZY. Well, you can make Marysia, and also Marynka out of that, bless my soul, but no such thing as Manka*.

(Petting her) So tell me, my little Marychna--my deceased brother, how did he treat you?

MANKA. He was good to me, but--only when we were alone; in the presence of mistress--

DAMAZY. (Stamping his foot) In the presence of auntie!

MANKA. In the presence of auntie he pretended to be indifferent, but he never spoke a cross word to me.

DAMAZY. The weak--dirty--henpecked old fogey!

MANKA. On the contrary, he often took my part.

DAMAZY. (Testily) What! Did she torment you? Beat you?

MANKA. No, but she was always so cold towards me, so distant--

DAMAZY. Well, I must go into this, bless my soul. It comes down to this, you're our niece.

MANKA. How good you are, sir!

DAMAZY. (Roughly) Uncle--repeat it!

* The nickname has a contemptuous suggestion, like "Liz"



MANKA. How good you are, uncle!

DAMAZY. And get used to that!--It's a disgrace, infamy, that one of our family, bless my soul, should be treated as a kitchen wench, a Manka--or whatever they call you!--Bah!

HELENA. (Entering from the right, humming and arranging a bouquet) Tra la la la! la la la! what roses! What roses! (She plucks some from a bush.)

DAMAZY. Helena, love, come over here!

HELENA. Look, daddy, what a lovely bouquet it will be--tra la la!--

DAMAZY. For whom?

HELENA. (Singing) For my aunt, for my aunt.

DAMAZY. Hm!--(Impatiently) Come on! (Pushing her towards MANKA) Kiss each other!

HELENA. (Not understanding, looking at him) Ha ha ha!--
Daddy!

DAMAZY. What, can't you manage it?

HELENA. (As if offended) Please! (With an amusing courtesy, puckering up her lips, she kisses her in the air.)
Like that?

DAMAZY. Not like that--heartily, for she's your cousin!

HELENA. My cousin! Ah, that's another thing!--(She throws her arms about her and kisses her) I do like kissing!
I'd like to kiss everybody--daddy too--shall I? (She throws



her arms about his neck.)

DAMAZY. Well, well, don't be childish!

HELENA. (To MANKA) Once more! (She kisses her.)

DAMAZY. Enough, enough, keep a little for later.

(Testily) You women, you are all like that--without any moderation--hm, hm.--Now amuse yourselves here and get better acquainted. (He goes out at the left. HELENA goes with him and whispers to him, then returns.)

SCENE II

MANKA, HELENA

MANKA. (Aside) Oh heavens, is not this a mockery of fate! To find a cousin in the girl who inflicts on me the most grievous wound. (Exhausted) My heart is bursting.

HELENA. (Returning, with little skips, and taking her hand) So you are my cousin.--Oh, how nice that is! How happy I am that I have someone to confide in; I never have had a companion, a friend. At home, I tell you, it is like a cloister: we live alone, and if it were not for Dziubalska--but after all she is a very good woman, even if she is a little queer. She is forever telling my fortune with cards--I am the queen of hearts, and the king of hearts is my future husband.--(Laughing) And, will you believe it, she always stacks the cards so that the king will be near me every time.



MANKA. (Sadly) It's come out just as she prophesied.

HELENA. Ho, ho, it may still turn out differently-- I must tease him a bit more.--Listen, do you like flowers? Come with me! (They pick a few.) Ah, ^{see those} what two handsome butterflies ~~are~~ chasing each other!--Wait--wait--wait!-- They've alighted, don't frighten them. (She keeps very quiet.) One is Pan Antoni, the other is Pan Seweryn. Whichever one is caught, I will marry him. (She laughs.) Oh, they've both flown away! What a shame!

MANKA. (Maliciously) That generally follows when anyone chases after two at once.

HELENA. What harm is there? One is pretty and the other is pretty.

MANKA (As before) But it seems that you can select only one.

HELENA. (Jokingly) Butterfly?

MANKA. Well, were you thinking of butterflies?

HELENA. (Abashed) How horrid you are!

MANKA. Yet one was to be Pan Antoni, the other Pan Seweryn.

HELENA. Now, you see, since you are my cousin, I want to confide in you, to tell you a great secret. Only don't betray me: sit down! (She seats her close by.) There's no one here? No one who will overhear us?

MANKA. No one.



HELENA. You know, of course, that Pan Antoni lives not far from us, in the neighborhood; that our deceased uncle leased for him a small farm, where they say he is doing quite well.--So, he's begun to visit us, and apparently has designs on me.

MANKA. (Looking into her eyes) And you, on the other hand, cannot bear him.

HELENA. What are you chattering about now?

MANKA. Then do you love him?

HELENA. It seems to me that I like him very much. (After a moment, naively) Listen, can that be an illusion?

MANKA. (Ironically, starting to get up) The very question--

HELENA. (Holding her back) Wait, listen to me!--He is such a nice man. Almost no one visits us, but he looks in nearly every other day. He brings me books to read--such splendid ones, I tell you.--Do you read books?

MANKA. I haven't the time; I read very seldom.

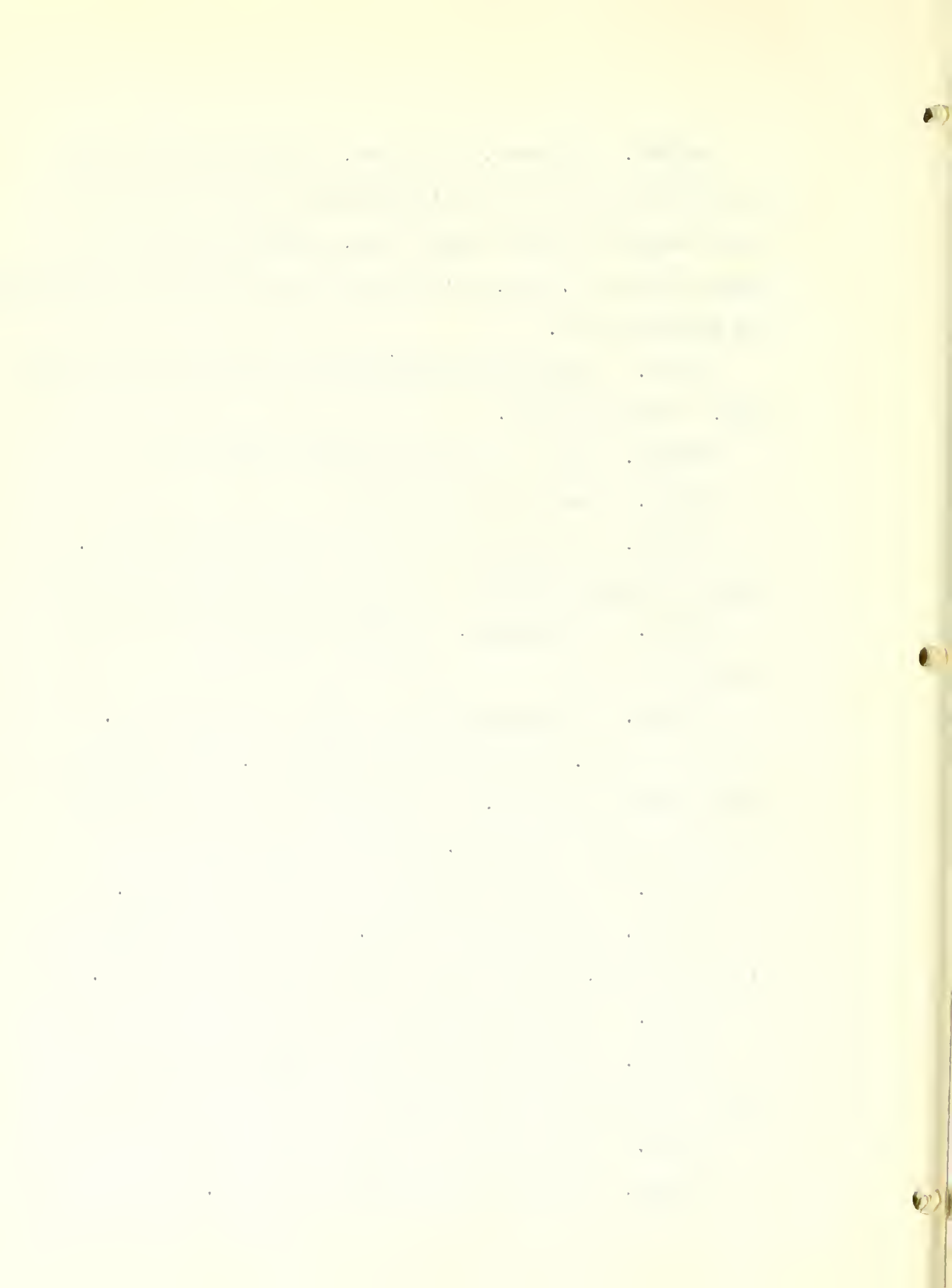
HELENA. Oh, that's too bad.--You will not believe how pleasant it is.--There are so many interesting things.

MANKA. Then how about Pan Antoni?

HELENA. He comes very often. Dziubalska, who is a great friend of his, says that he is in love with me.

MANKA. Do you know that only from her?

HELENA. (Lowering her eyes) Of course. (After a



moment) Ah, if you only knew how my heart beat when he proposed.

MANKA. And so he has proposed.

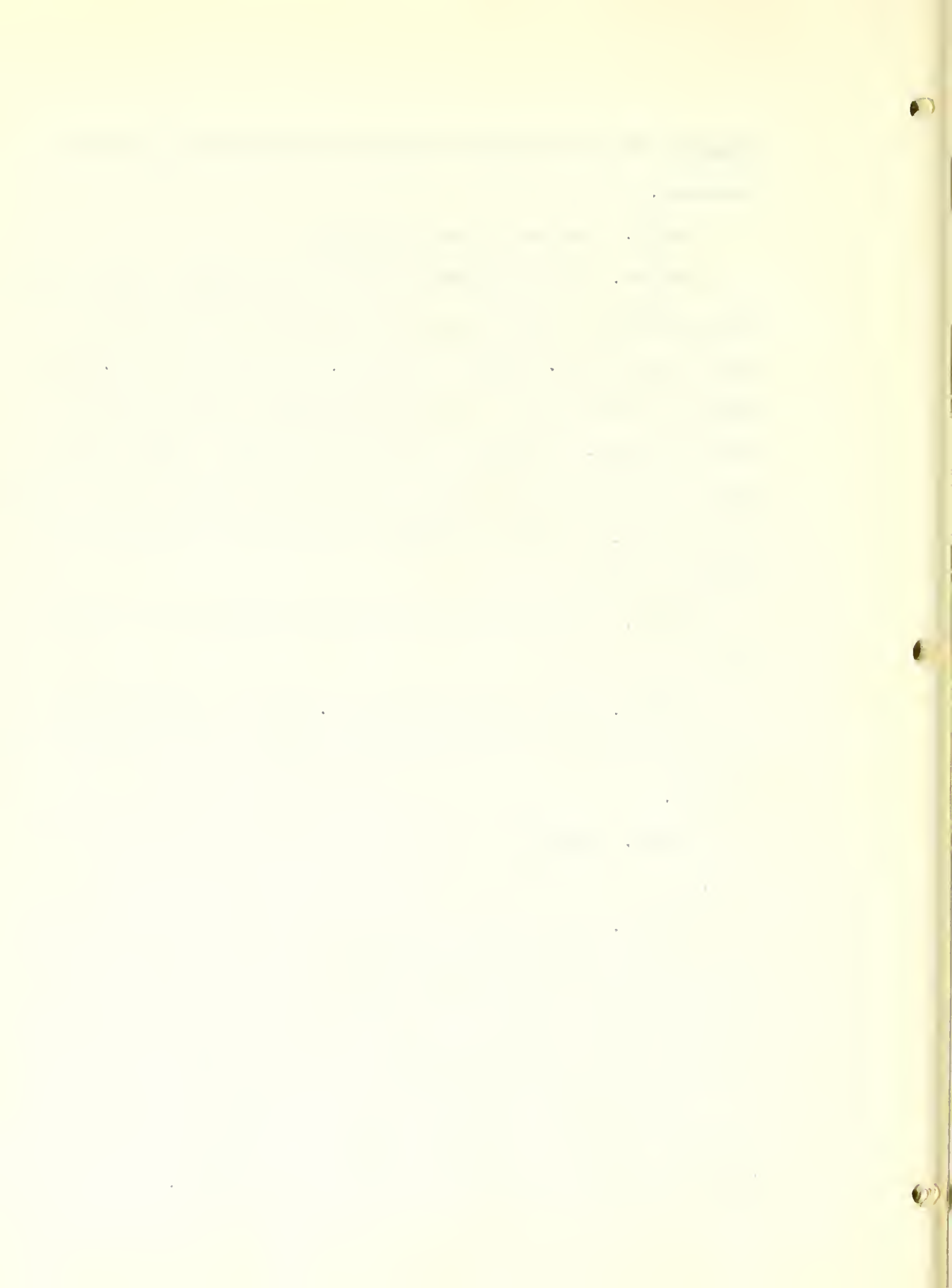
HELENA. Yes--sort of--even father doesn't know of it; I was ashamed to tell him; you are the first one that I have confided in.--And I tell you, how upset he was!--~~He~~ shook all over, and I felt as if someone had poured hot water over me. Imagine, I was so confused I didn't know what to do with myself--and at the same time it was so pleasant for me, a kind of blissful feeling.--Did anyone ever propose to you?

MANKA. In my position--a poor orphan--can I dream of that?

HELENA. Oh, don't exaggerate!--Am I a millionaire? If Antoni loves me, he certainly doesn't do so from any hope of gain.

MANKA. (Warmly) And you do not even value this affection!

HELENA. Well, you see, since yesterday, when we arrived here--only, my dear, you must not breathe a word of this to anyone--daddy, somehow, who had evidently favored Antoni, and many a time, when he was in a good humor, had teased me with sly hints--now seems to have changed his mind--he speaks otherwise. (After a moment, Frankly, I don't know--but it seems to me that he prefers Pan Seweryn.



MANKA. And how do you feel about it?

HELENA. I? Dear heavens! Do I know what to do? I think my aunt wants us to marry.

MANKA. (Aside) Oh, my God! My God!

HELENA. She will give us some part of the estate. My father, although he says nothing outright, gives me to understand that in this way we may promote family goodwill.--Now I don't know myself how to behave?

MANKA. Take the counsel of your heart, if it speaks for Pan Antoni.

HELENA. Of course, but what if they will not pay any attention to it?

MANKA. After all, it is not likely that they will force you.

HELENA. Ah, I am terribly afraid of that.--This project seems to please my father and auntie so.

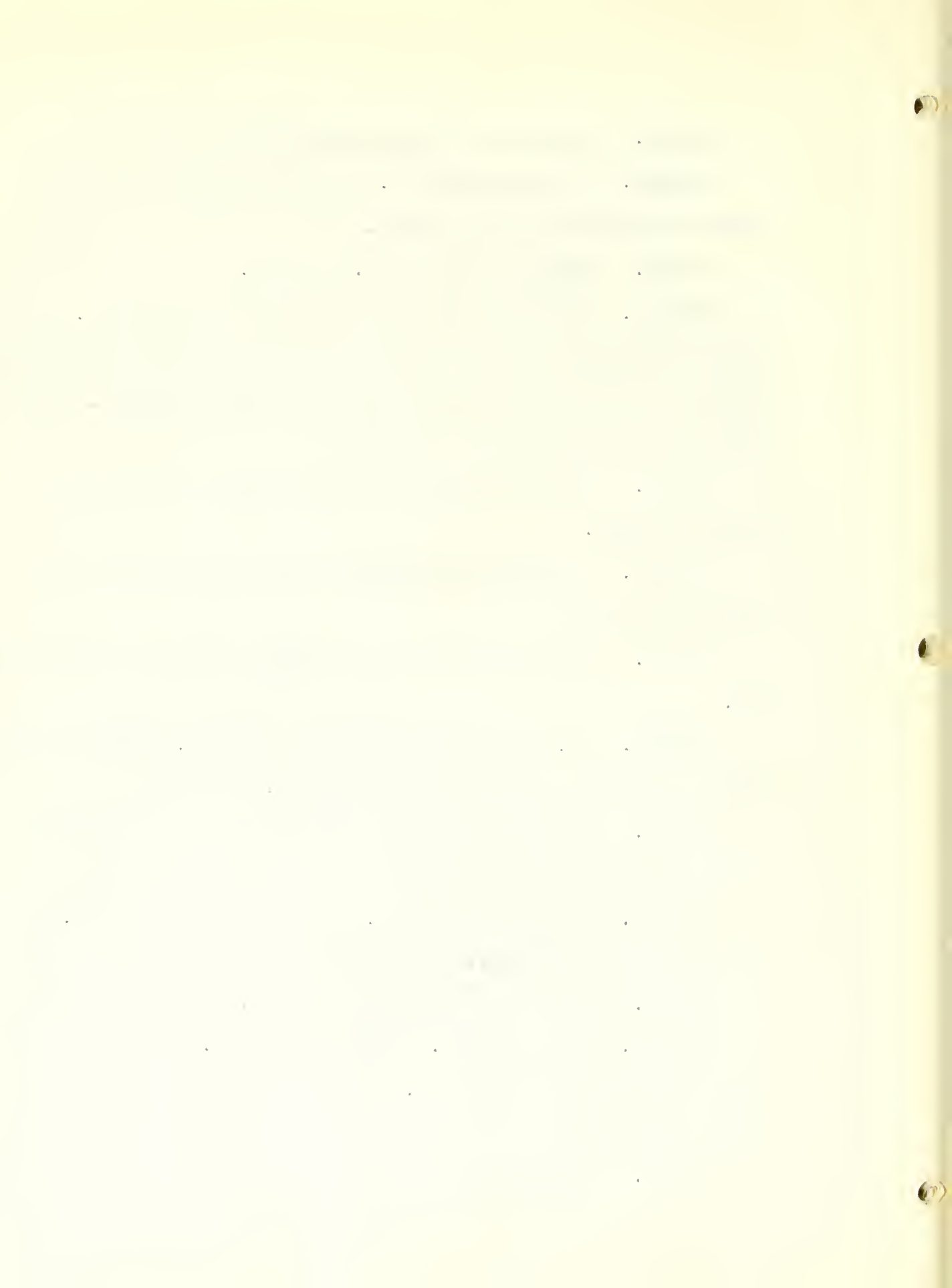
MANKA. (Rising, excitedly) But what if the one whom they intend for you loved another?

HELENA. (Rising also) Ah, how nice that would be!-- Do you know anything about that?

MANKA. I can tell you that it is so.

HELENA. Well, please!--How could it be!--Oh, most likely there is nothing of the sort.--What use would there be of such a comedy?

MANKA. He will play his part in it in accordance with



his aunt's desire, pretending to court you.--Oh, look him straight in the ^{face} ~~eye~~, for when he says that he loves you, he will tell a lie.--You would bring suffering upon yourself for your whole life--I warn you!

HELENA. Ah, what a fright I am in!

MANKA. It would be best to tell your father plainly, to reveal your sentiments to him.

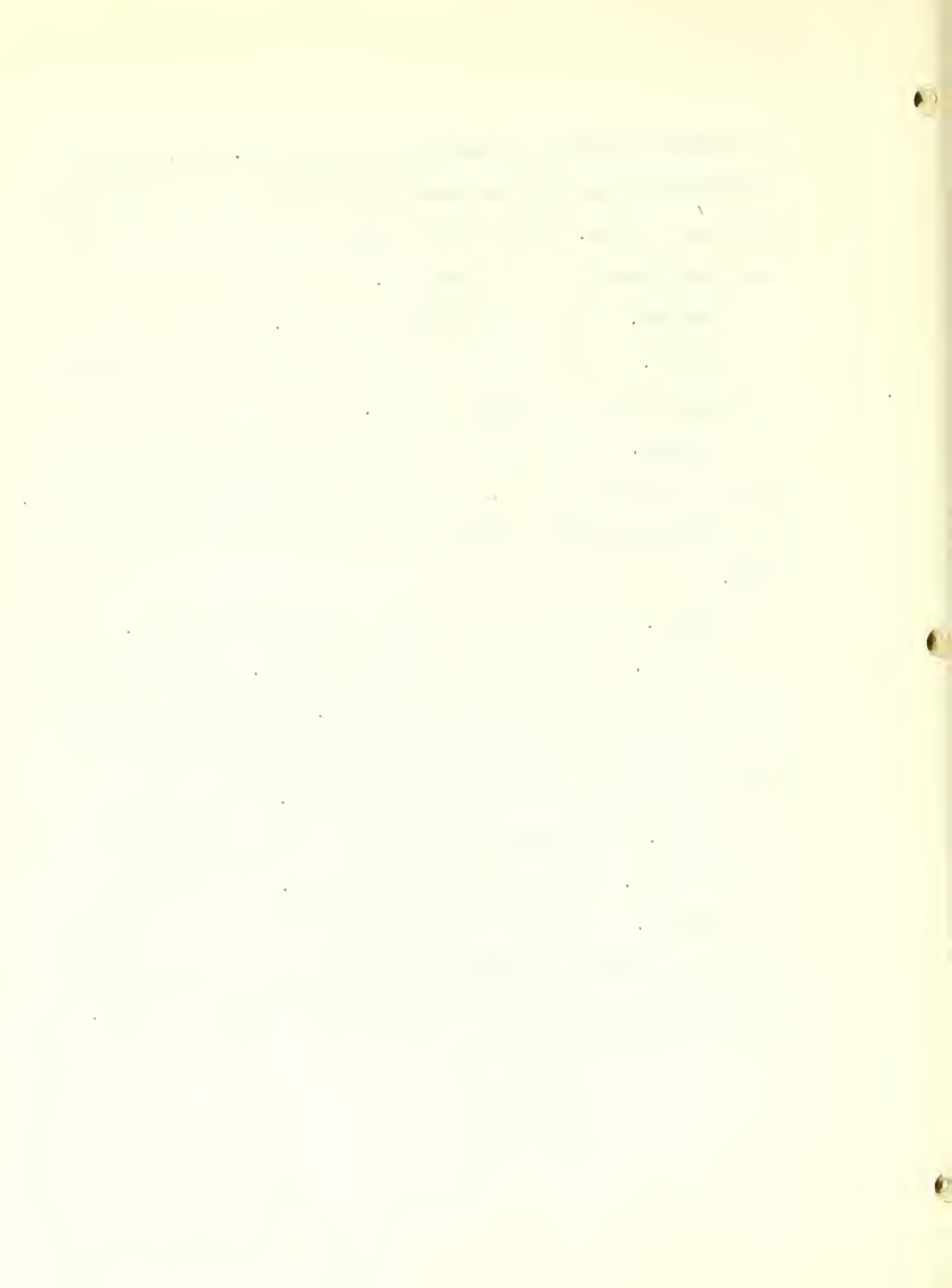
HELENA. Do I dare? If he were only my mother, that would be another thing. Daddy will begin to make fun of me, and make sly hints,--although he loves me, he loves me very much!

MANKA. Then it will be all the easier for you.

HELENA. But it only seems so to you. Although he is my dad, yet he is a man all the same. How could I tell him straight out, for instance, "I love Pan Antoni"?--Oh, for heaven's sake, I should burn with shame.

MANKA. (Looking around) Look, there he is; we'll find out directly. (She retires to the rear.)

HELENA. Oh, don't go--where are you going?--(SEWERYN comes in; HELENA, pretending that she does not see him, goes on picking flowers and slowly draws near the exit.)



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SCENE III

MANKA, hidden. HELENA, SEWERYN; later, ANTONI; still later,
PAN DAMAZY.

SEWERYN. (Coming in from the right, stops and looks at
HELENA, making a gesture of disdain. --After a moment, aside)
I thought that it would be a simple thing to get married to
the first girl that came along, so long as I'd get my free-
dom by it.--I forgot one small thing, that is, the necessity
of playing the rôle of suitor--there is no bond of sympathy
between us.--Ha! It's hard! (Aloud) How do you do, Panna
Helena?

HELENA. (Busy with the flowers) How do you do, sir.

SEWERYN. You were going for a walk?

HELENA. Yes, sir.

SEWERYN. You did not expect to meet me here.

HELENA. No, sir.

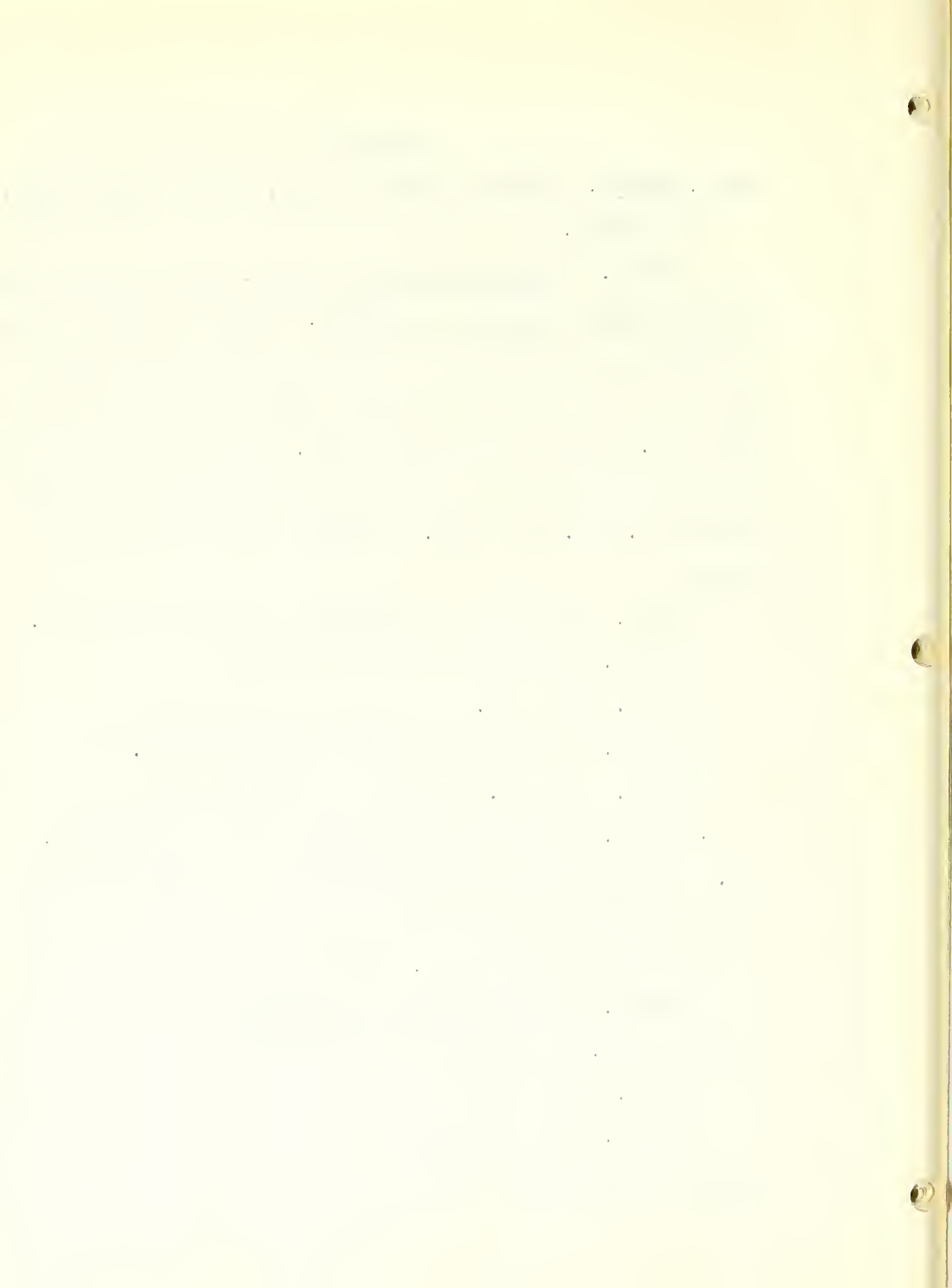
SEWERYN. (To himself, repeating) "Yes, sir,"--"no,
sir." (After a moment, aloud) How are you enjoying yourself
in our house?

HELENA. Oh, very much!

SEWERYN. (With artificial enthusiasm) Oh, how happy
that makes me!

HELENA. Why?

SEWERYN. Why? (Aside) How shall I answer her?
(Aloud, distractedly) And you wonder why?



HELENA. Of course.

SEWERYN. (Aside) No, I am making an idiot of myself here. (After a moment, aloud) But I am curious to know for whom this lovely bouquet is intended, all the lovelier since your hands have arranged it. (Aside) Well, I have begun somehow!

HELENA. For auntie, my dear sir.

SEWERYN. Might I beg even a single rosebud from it?

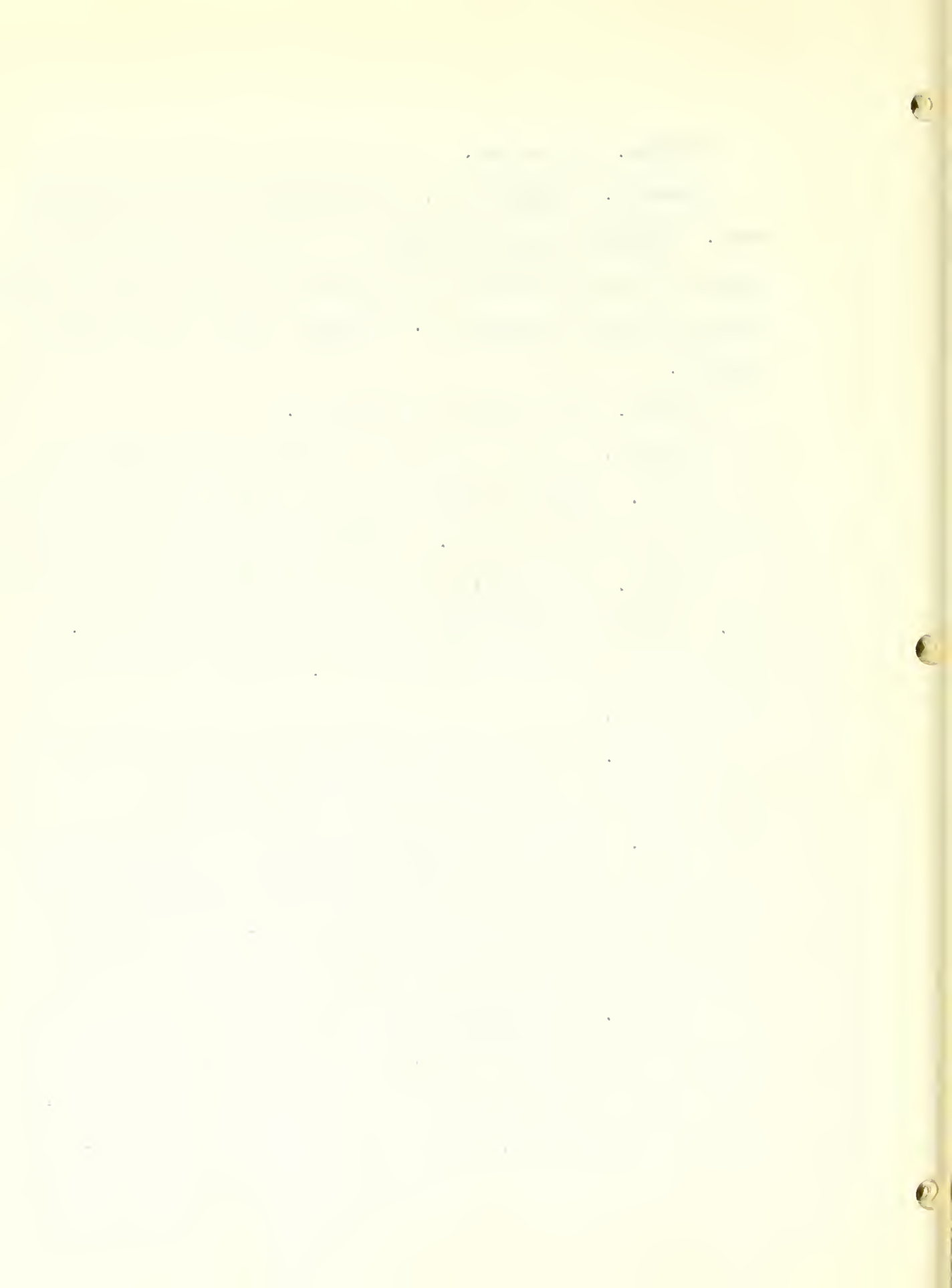
MANKA. (Who has drawn near in a state of great emotion.) I will select one for you. (SEWERYN is put out of countenance.)

HELENA. (Holding out the bouquet, gaily) Look at this one! (SEWERYN mechanically takes it from MANKA'S hand.) Do you see, sir, how splendid it is.--Manka picked it with her own hand.

SEWERYN. Ah!--(Aside, not knowing what to do with the rose) Charming situation, I must say.

MANKA. (Moved, in a low voice, while HELENA withdraws) Did I annoy you? (Trembling, with tears in her voice) If you have to throw it away, give it to me. I will keep it as a keepsake, because you have held it in your hand.

SEWERYN. (In a low voice) You know that for the same reason it is precious to me. (After a moment) But to fight with necessity when it is inexorable is impossible. Manka, I implore you, have some control over yourself!



MANKA. (With anguish) Ah! (She restrains her tears.
From the right ANTONI comes in, draws near HELENA, and with
a gesture admires the bouquet.)

HELENA. (Giving it to him to sniff) Do you like it,
sir? (They walk about in the rear, conversing.)

ANTONI. Lovely! (After a moment) How we look at
everything through glasses colored to suit our own point of
view! I have never cared for auntie's house; the atmosphere
of this place oppressed me. Today, when you are here, it has
become a paradise for me.

HELENA. (Giving him a rose, jokingly) This is for
your compliment.

ANTONI. Thanks for the flower, but I don't like your
explanation. Was that a compliment?

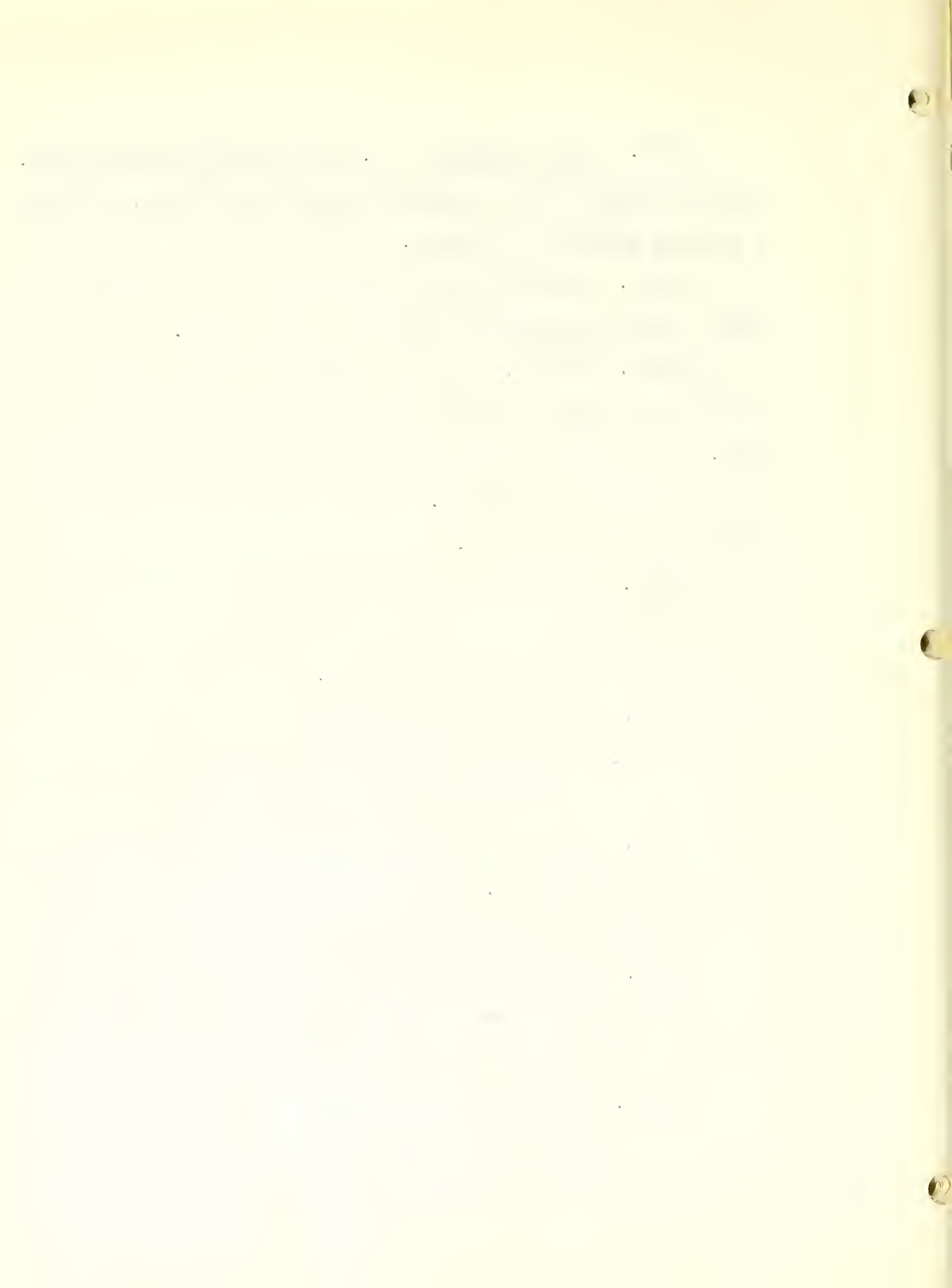
SEWERYN. (Approaching them) What are you two talking
about?

ANTONI. Why do you wish to know? If you did know, you
wouldn't understand us.

SEWERYN. But why?

ANTONI. (Significantly) You have certain prejudices,
and it is hard to fight against them. What is sacred for one,
to another may appear a laughing matter.

SEWERYN. Ah, I beg your pardon. (Aside) Both will
stand in my way--a fatal situation. (He withdraws and throws
himself discontentedly on the bench. On the other side of



the stage, in the arbor, MANKA remains seated, with her head in her hands.)

DAMAZY. (Coming in at the rear with his pipe, going from left to right. He stops, and puffing away, looks for several moments at HELENA and ANTONI.) Ho, ho, what an interesting conversation, bless my soul!

HELENA. Ah! Daddy! (She runs to him.)

DAMAZY. You seem a bit too familiar, my girl.

ANTONI. (Somewhat confused, with an attempt at humor)
We were just talking about--

DAMAZY. (Not looking at him) Helena, I want you to come with me to talk business. (They go out at the right.)

ANTONI. (Looking after them, after a moment, nervously)
What does that mean? He did not look at me at all. I'm beginning to get alarmed. Since yesterday I have noticed in Pan Damazy a certain change.--My God! I love her so! Can I have been hoping in vain? (He goes out slowly after them.)

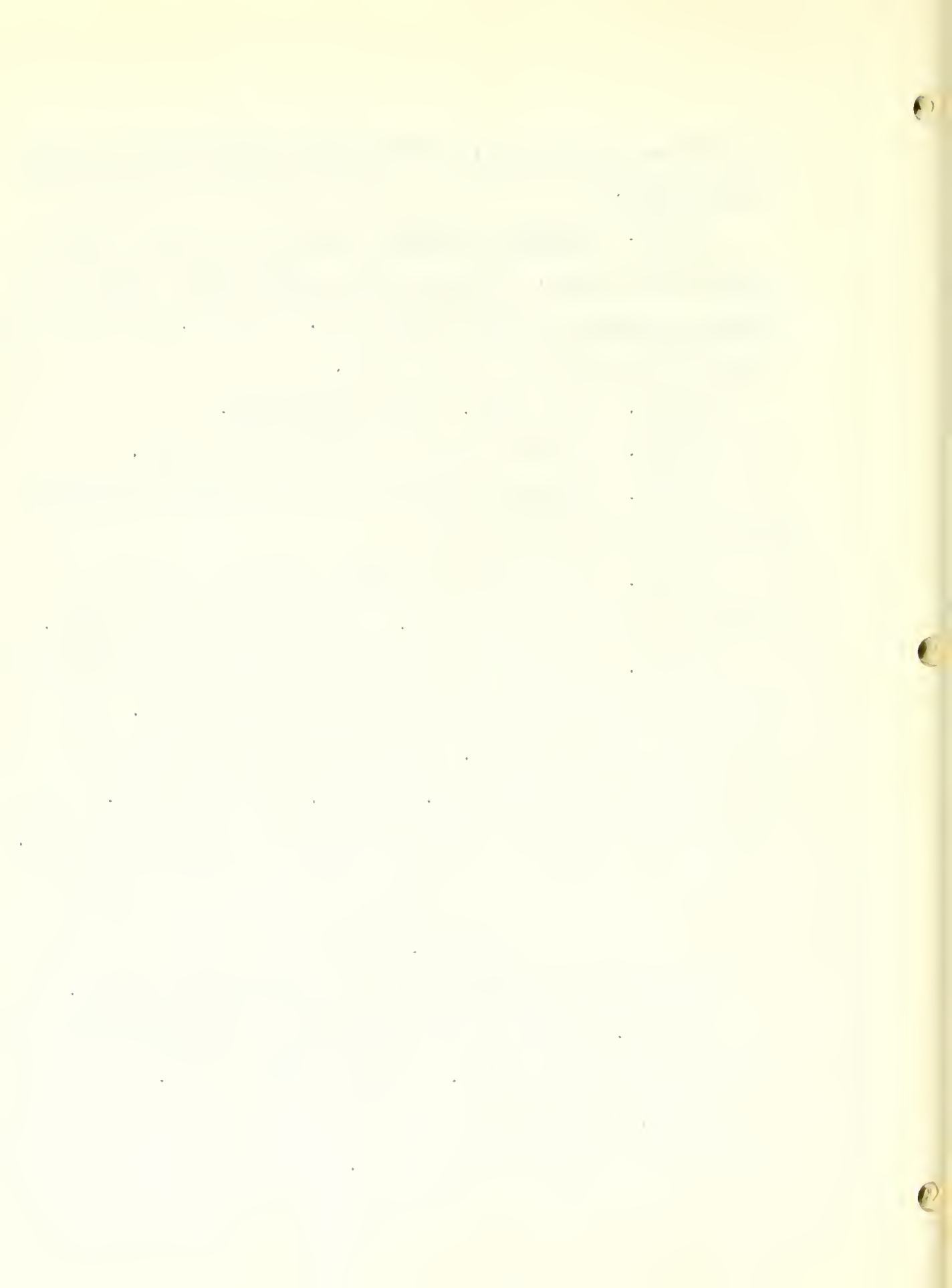
SCENE IV

MANKA, SEWERYN

(This scene must be played in a very lively manner.)

SEWERYN. (Rises, goes to MANKA, and leads her violently to the front of the stage.) Manka, listen to me!

MANKA. Perhaps I have listened too much, unfortunately, and now I am doing penance for it.



SEWERYN. Yet I have explained to you what's at stake.

MANKA. (Pressing her temples) I don't know anything, I don't understand anything--do with me as you wish, but do not demand that with my own hands I tear out what has struck deep roots within me.

SEWERYN. But--you don't understand me! I love you always.

MANKA. (Bitterly) You love me?

SEWERYN. I love you, you silly girl, you know this well. The mere fact that I want to sacrifice myself, gives the best proof ^{of} what you mean to me!

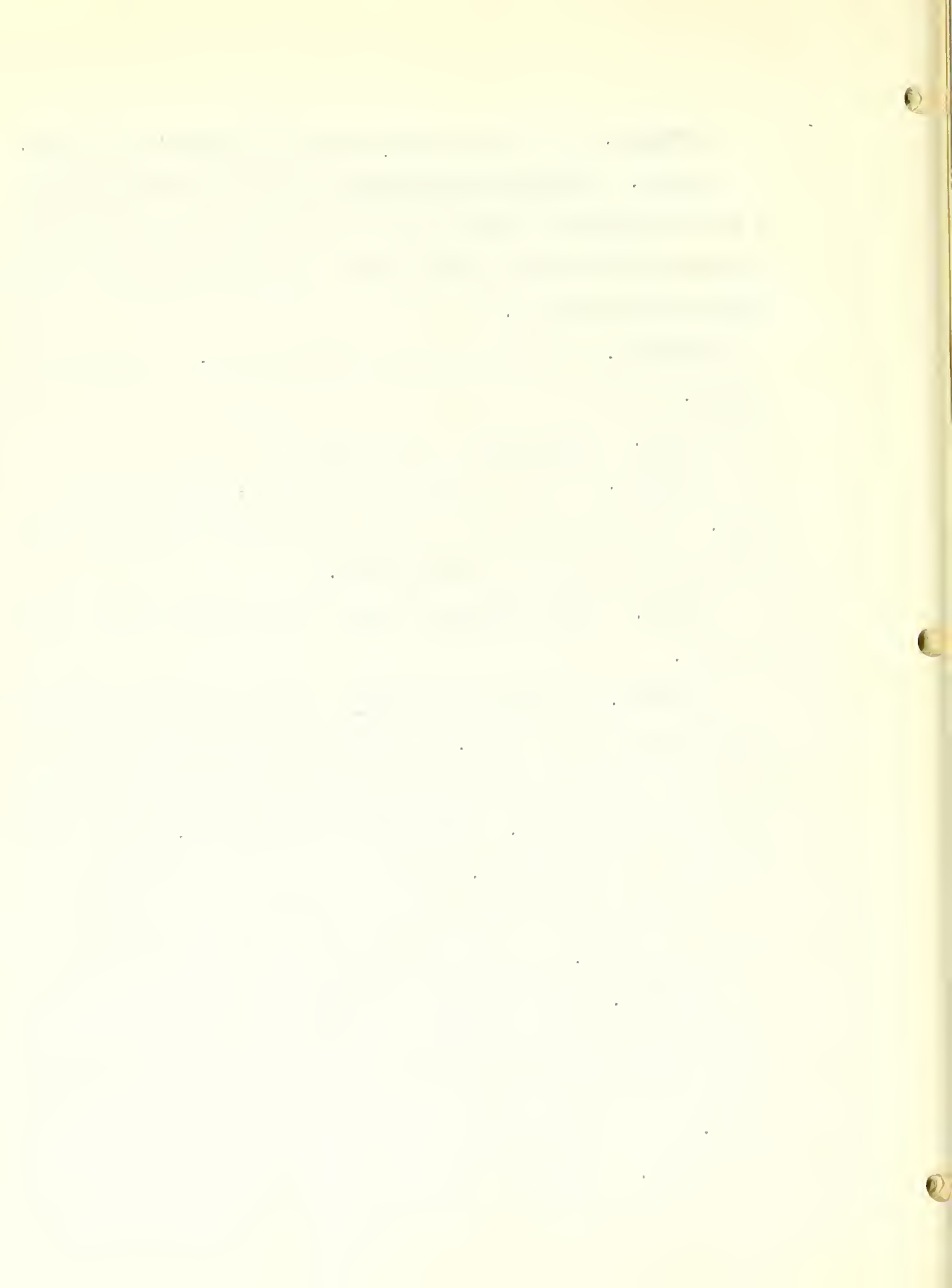
MANKA. (In a passion) What do you take me for? What? Tell me!

SEWERYN. (Grasping her hand) For a creature some evil spirits have bound me to. I could not live without you--I must have you--for myself, to create for you a life such as you never dreamed of. (Violently) Don't weep, for you will drive me to extremities!

MANKA. Could there be a greater one than to bid me hear such words!

SEWERYN. Then what shall we do? You know that I have nothing of my own; but when I am married, according to my aunt's desire, she will give me the estate, and all will be yours!

MANKA. (Weeping) And he doesn't even see the whole



monstrosity of what he says! He must be without a conscience!

SEWERYN. But who is to blame for it all? Tell me!

Not I!

MANKA. Much less I. Who here is being deceived and cheated?

SEWERYN. You are to blame. (Grasping her around the waist, and looking passionately into her eyes) In those eyes dwells some Satan or other who tempts me, takes away my reason, and makes an idiot of a man. You saw what happened. In the presence of that silly goose I could not find my tongue; I stammered like a schoolboy.

MANKA. (Freeing herself from his embrace) No, I cannot conceive of this--it is vile!

SEWERYN. (Beside himself, threatening her with his fists) Manka!

MANKA. I tell you, beat me, flog me! I will fall at your feet!--(With a burst of tears) But do not trample on me, do not ^{abuse} spurn me!

SEWERYN. (Tormented) Oh! This is driving me mad! Then what can we do? What? Tell me! Advise me!--What means are there? (Taking her again in his embrace, with more feeling) Give me millions, and today I will go with you to the altar.

MANKA. (After a moment, looking into his eyes, leaning her head on his breast) What use have we for millions?



SEWERYN. (Looking around nervously, aside) But someone might see us.

MANKA. (Pushing him away, with a gentle reproach) Are you afraid? Are you ashamed of the feelings ~~of~~ which you swore ^{you had for} to me?

SEWERYN. (In a persuasive tone) Consider well what sort of a life it would be--to live on love. Have some sense!

MANKA. I didn't have any when I listened to your protestations of love. I shan't regain any today, and it is your own fault.

SEWERYN. (Clenching his fists) Oh!

MANKA. (With a cry, clutching her head) I'm going mad!

SEWERYN. Quiet, for God's sake! (Looking around) Don't get excited, don't make scenes. (He tries to take her hand; she draws away) You know that all I am doing is only for you, that I am simply making a sacrifice of myself--no one shall ever take my heart from you, not even my wife. (MANKA shakes her head) Now you are getting excited again. Listen, I know myself that perhaps it is vile, that I am deceiving her, that I am betraying my own brother, but it is merely a surer proof of my blind passion for you. Manka, don't make such a difficult problem any harder for me than it is--understand once for all our position. Once I am free, I will divorce her.

MANKA. I still fear God; perhaps you will bring me to the point of forgetting him; but not yet.



SEWERYN. Manka!

MANKA. Already you have made of me a perverted hypocrite; I am obliged to act in secret, to play a part, to lie, but nevertheless, I can still justify myself somehow. But later, how could I in decency take anything from you, how in decency could I deceive the woman who will have a right to all, to you yourself, as well as to the estate? (Weeping) Ah! I should every moment fear divine punishment.

SEWERYN. Well, don't get dramatic or poetic about it. (Aside) How can I get this out of her head? (Aloud) Many people marry without affection, and for their whole lives, but I tell you that I will divorce her; I will say that our dispositions are incompatible. This is a simple matter: blame auntie for it, who in the name of generosity sells us off. (More powerfully) Anyhow, I have a right to that estate! Sooner or later, it's mine!

MANKA. (With alarm, looks him in the eyes.) Then listen, even though I go as to my execution, I will fall at her feet and confess everything.--Perhaps for the time being she will bestow something on us, even though a little bit, and with God's help--

SEWERYN. (Violently) Are you in your right mind or are you mad?

MANKA. (With suffering) Oh, my God!

SEWERYN. (Throwing at her the rose which he has held



in his hand all the while) Do you want to ruin me? (He walks up and down with great strides, finally, very much upset, he starts to leave. MANKA, trying to pick up the rose, falls on her knees, and remains so, not seeing anyone, stupified.)

SCENE V

The same, TYKALSKA, the NOTARY; later, JAN

TYKALSKA. (With her stocking, to SEWERYN, jokingly, blocking his way) Well, well, well, why are you so upset?-- Wait!

SEWERYN. (Testily) Oh, let me alone, auntie! (He goes out.)

TYKALSKA. What's this. Manka's fallen down! What's happened here?

NOTARY (Aside) Scandalous scenes are beginning. That's good.

TYKALSKA. (Raising her) Manka dear, what's the matter? Did you faint?

MANKA. (Making an effort to laugh) Ha, ha, ha!--No!

TYKALSKA. But why were you kneeling?--Did you two have a quarrel?

MANKA. (As before) No! I dropped the rose and when I tried to pick it up, I fell on my knees.

TYKALSKA. But what was Seweryn doing here?

MANKA. I don't know. He was just passing by.



TYKALSKA. (Nodding her head) Hm, hm, hm --there was something between you here. (Looking at her closely) You've been weeping--but what if it, dry your eyes, don't worry. (In her ear) The course of true love, you know, my dear. You had a little spat, and so you'll make up, I tell you. (She kisses her on the head, MANKA kisses her on the hand.)

NOTARY. (To MANKA, as she is going out.) Bravo, bravo! Be firm, stand up for your rights.

MANKA. (Stopping) I do not understand you, sir.

NOTARY. The worst weapon in a woman's hand is compliance and too much self-sacrifice. Nothing bores a man or repels him sooner.

MANKA. You are evidently making fun of me. (She goes out.)

JAN. (Meeting her at the exit) Please, miss--

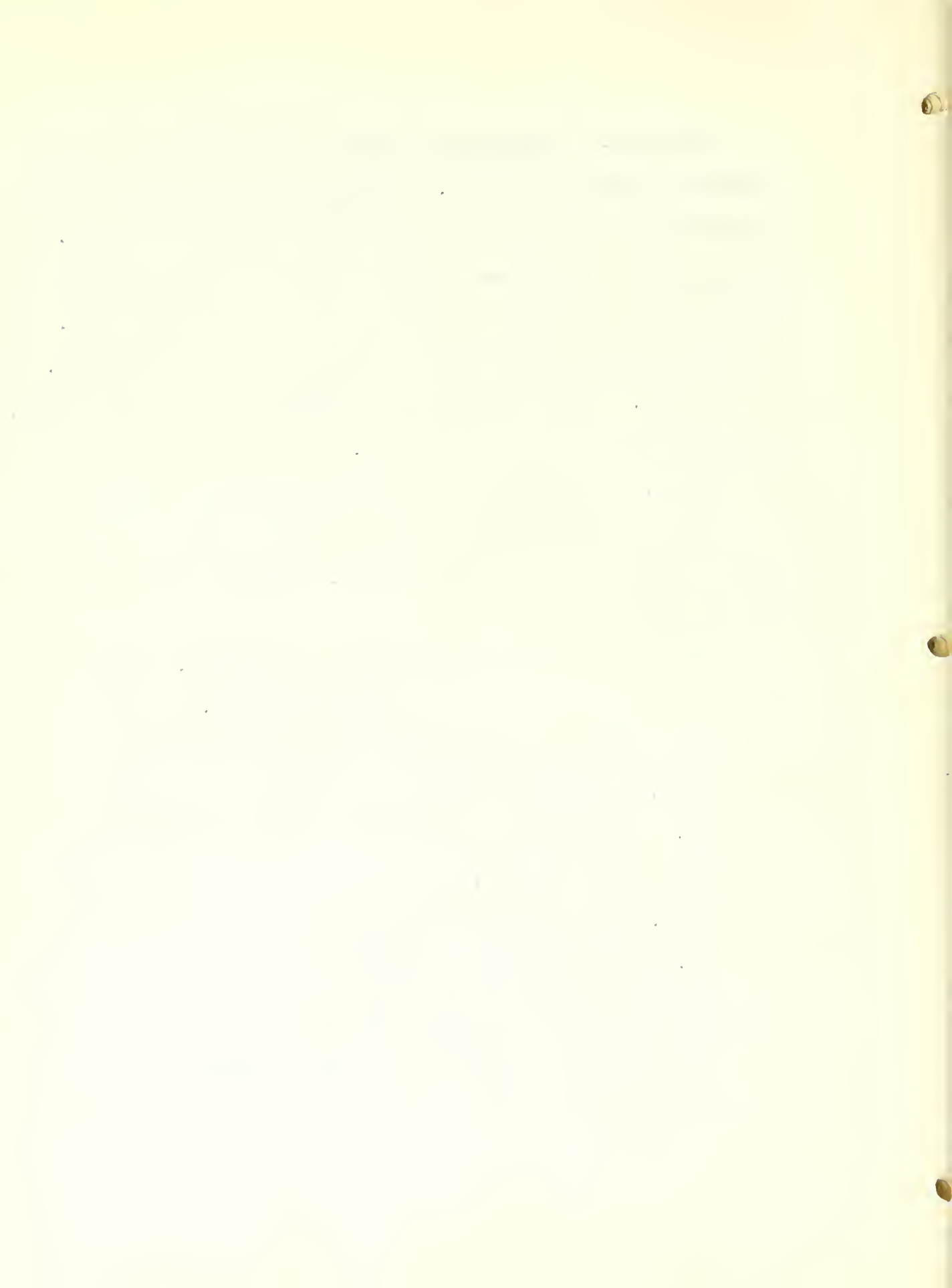
MANKA. (Angered) What do you want?

JAN. The mistress gave orders to set the table for lunch here, in the arbor.

MANKA. (As before) Well then, set it here.

JAN. But the mistress told me to say that--(Walking off with her, he speaks in a low voice.)

MANKA. (Aside, pressing her hand to her forehead) Ah, heavens! heavens! (They go out.)



SCENE VI.

The NOTARY, TYKALSKA; later MANKA, JAN

NOTARY. (Aside) If only the sly ~~one~~^{girl} would say what she thinks! If she did not understand, then I am not a notary,-- nor Bajdalski either.

TYKALSKA. (With a sigh) Poor thing!

NOTARY. Who?

TYKALSKA. Well, who should it be? That orphan. (Knitting her stocking, she sits down on the bench.) I must say that as long as the deceased lived, it was entirely different; he loved her as his own child.

NOTARY. And perhaps, after all, really--eh--eh--eh--

TYKALSKA. (Scandalized) Why, my dear sir, for shame!

NOTARY. (Sitting down near her) But what would be so unusual about it? People are human, my dear lady.

TYKALSKA. What an idea.

NOTARY. Pretty little girl. (After a moment) Pan Seweryn--eh--eh--eh--

TYKALSKA. (Looking into his eyes) Well, Pan Seweryn? My dear sir, why do you connect Seweryn with her? I am very curious.

NOTARY. The thought just occurred to me.

TYKALSKA. That wasn't nice. (After a moment) But if you only knew what I know--ho! ho! Only I can't tell you.

NOTARY. How's that? Is it a secret?

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TYKALSKA. Just so. They say that women have long tongues, but that's a fable, my dear sir. Many a man is a greater gossip than ten women.

NOTARY. That does happen, dear lady.

TYKALSKA. Although not necessarily like my deceased Toby, who was a very honest soul, I tell you—but he was like an old woman, God protect him! If he knew anything he would positively fall ill, if he did not blurt it out, immediately.--However, I might tell you, but this isn't the place for it!--

NOTARY. (*Ironically*) If it's a secret, I will not intrude at all--eh--eh--eh. At all events a woman who knows how to keep a secret is a rarity that I know how to respect.

TYKALSKA. If so, then I will tell you, for I know that you will not repeat it to anybody. (*After a moment, mysteriously*) You must know that Seweryn and Manka are having a love affair.

NOTARY. (*Pretending astonishment*) Phew! Really!

TYKALSKA. On my honor! Oho, they don't fool me-- only quiet, for heaven's sake, for if this should get to my sister---!

NOTARY. Pani Zegocina must have other plans then?

TYKALSKA. I do not say anything against her intention to bequeath everything to him, for he is her pet, my dear sir--let him have it--and have an end to it! But just what

harm would it do if those poor things should marry?--Tell me that!

NOTARY. Women like to make matches--that's well-known.

TYKALSKA. It's so nice to see how those two children love each other. (After a moment) I married Toby purely from affection, and I never complained, although he was poor as a churchmouse. There was so much poverty that you couldn't cut it with an axe.

NOTARY. Dear lady, mutual love is the greatest treasure; I had a wife, so I know.

TYKALSKA. If my sister refuses to recognize their love, nevertheless I will find a means to help them. I'll find it, on my honor!

NOTARY. And you would perform a service to God--but what means is there?

TYKALSKA. Oh, my dear sir, why should I explain myself! (To herself) When I say that I will find it, I will find it.--What was for Antoni alone, I will divide into two.

NOTARY. Have you some capital of your own?

TYKALSKA. Perhaps I have. (She becomes thoughtful, and smiles to herself.)

NOTARY. (Aside, rising) I am beginning to think that this woman is playing a game. That churchmouse, Toby, must have left her a few pennies--she is saving the interest, and living off her sister. (Aloud) I will not intrude upon

your confidence, but I must remind you that perhaps your funds are badly invested, unsafe. As a lawyer, and by my principles, without boasting, disinterested, I might be able, perhaps, to give some advice.

TYKALSKA. No, no, my dear sir, I thank you very kindly, it is not worth while to speak of it. There is none to give.

NOTARY. (Aside) Such is the nature of women: when it is a question of blabbing something about someone, their tongues itch; but when it comes to not letting on what they have sewed up somewhere in their petticoats, then they clench their teeth. (After a moment, looking at his watch) I must look up Genio; his train must already be at the station. (Towards the end of this scene, MANKA enters with JAN, who under her direction places the table in the arbor.)

SCENE VII

The same; ZEGOCINA, arm-in-arm with HELENA; PAN DAMAZY; a moment later, ANTONI.

ZEGOCINA. (To the NOTARY, whom she has approached, leaving HELENA) Well, how about it, notary? Will it work? How do things look to you? Did you speak with him for yourself?

NOTARY. Slowly, slowly, my dear lady, I am preparing the ground.... Oh!...! In affairs of this kind, patience is the main thing; haste might ruin everything.



ZEGOCINA. I rely on you.--I seem to be progressing all right so far. My insinuations have had their effect on him. (To DAMAZY, who, standing near the table, is looking over the food spread out there) You see, brother, what a modest spread!

DAMAZY. Bless my soul, you must be joking. Ten hungry men might eat their fill here.

ZEGOCINA. This is only a small appetizer. You gentlemen must save your hunger for dinner. (Standing by the table) And in the meantime, please eat what there is. (Looking around) But where is Seweryn? (To HELENA, who has remained in the background, talking with ANTONI) Helena, dear, please!

DAMAZY. (Following her) My dear girl, don't hide yourself in the corners; let us sit here together.

HELENA. Daddy dear, I am not at all hungry; really, daddy.

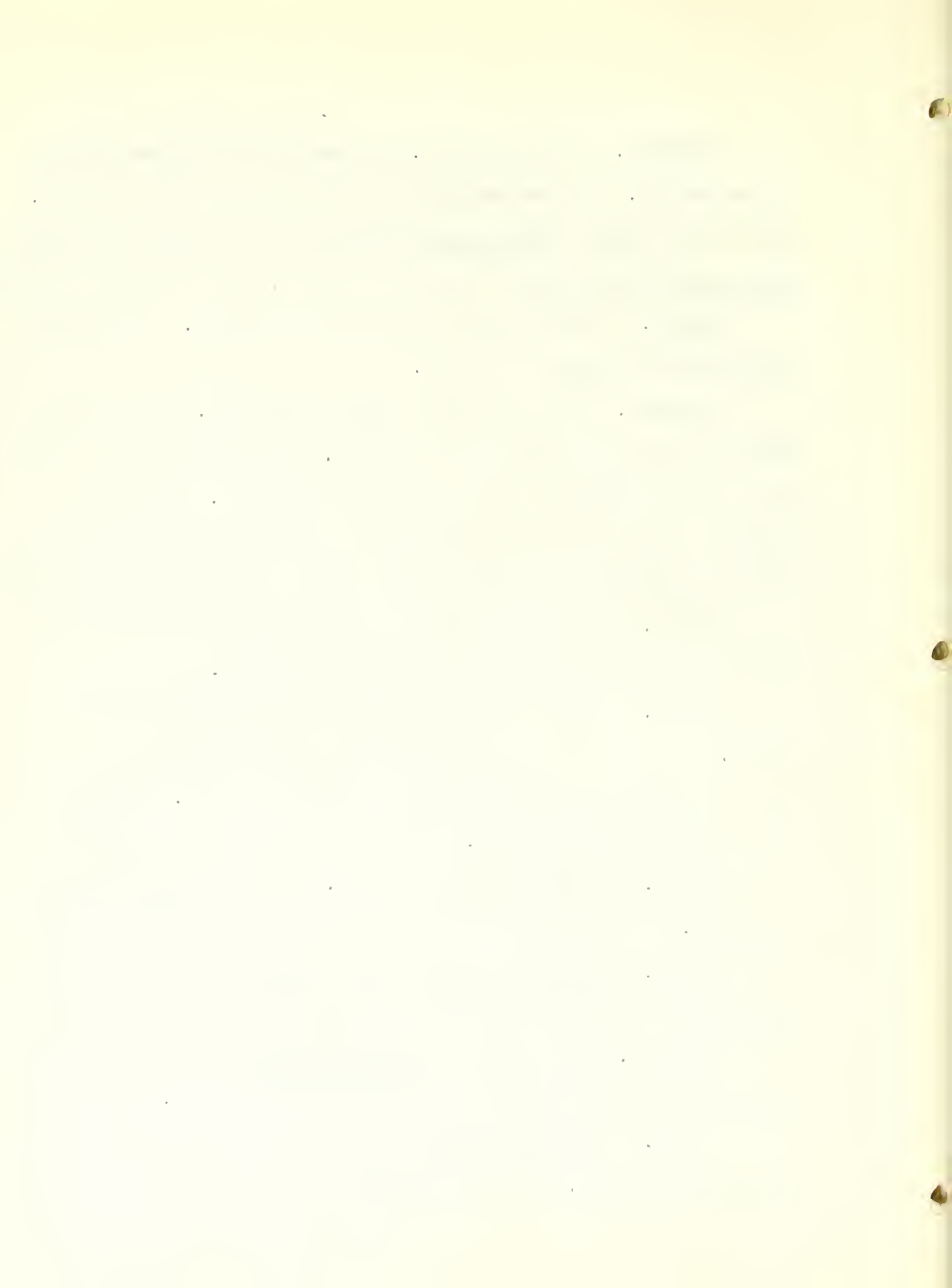
DAMAZY. That makes no difference: sit here. What's up now? (ANTONI looks upset.)

HELENA. (Pouting) Oh, heavens! (She sits down beside ZEGOCINA.)

DAMAZY. (Catching sight of MANKA, who is standing at one side) And little Marya?

ZEGOCINA. Who's that? (Restlessly, watching PAN DAMAZY go to fetch MANKA) Oh, she has work to do.

DAMAZY. (Escorting her) Sit down too. (He seats her beside HELENA. ZEGOCINA shrugs her shoulders.--To



TYKALSKA, who is walking up and down with her stocking and has drawn near the table, making a place for her) Please!

TYKALSKA. Thanks, my dear sir. (Returning to the bench) I don't eat at this hour. (The company is seated in the following order: at the left, the NOTARY; at the back, behind the table, ZEGOCINA, HELENA, MANKA; at the right, PAN DAMAZY.)

ZEGOCINA. But you gentlemen are accustomed to drink vodka before eating. (Impatiently looking around) Where can Seweryn have hidden himself?

DAMAZY. Yes, as it were, to drown dull care, bless my soul.

ZEGOCINA. Jan, go find Pan Seweryn. Don't you know where he is?

JAN. In his room. (He goes out.)

ANTONI. If you will allow me, aunt, I will take his place for the moment. (Pouring the vodka, to DAMAZY) Your health, sir?

DAMAZY. Bless my soul, with pleasure.

ZEGOCINA. (To the NOTARY, who sits with his elbows on the table, hands folded, looking eagerly at the food.) What is our notary thinking about?

NOTARY. Dear lady, the sight of this, which you are pleased to call a small appetizer, suggests to me a long series of philosophical reflections.

DAMAZY. (Before drinking, to the NOTARY) To your health,

my dear sir!

NOTARY. (Thanking him with a nod of his head) And if I had the talent of the late Bishop of Warmia,* I should write a fable with the title, Men and Wolves. (He takes a glass.) When a hungry wolf siezes a lamb or a calf, there are no boundaries to our indignation. (He drinks, looking at the meal with greedy eyes.) They encircle him with beaters, they pursue him, they poison him, without considering that he is within his rights, since nature did not create him herbivorous....

ZEGOCINA. Perhaps you'll have a piece of the pasty?

NOTARY. (Putting it on his plate) You are very kind.-- But when this human being, although he has bread for the satisfaction of his hunger, for the sake of luxury kills a lamb, a pig, barbarously hunts wild animals in order that he may have the means to make such a pasty, no one even takes this ill of him.

DAMAZY. I confess, my dear sir, that I should be the first to do so.

JAN. (Coming in) Pan Seweryn is indisposed. He says that he is not coming.

ZEGOCINA. Indisposed? What has happened to him? Manka,

* Ignacy Krosicki (1735-1801) the most famous writer of fables in Polish literature.

please go find out.

TYKALSKA. (Rising) I will go. (Aside) That sister of mine--she has no sense.--How could she! (She goes out.)

DAMAZY. (To MANKA) But aren't you ill too? Your face is flushed.

MANKA. (In a low tone) My head aches. (She presses her hand to her forehead.)

NOTARY. (Very busy with his eating) For example, do you people not know Pan Tadeusz--Mickiewicz?*

DAMAZY. Tadeusz? I knew one Mickiewicz, but, bless my soul, his name was Mark.

HELENA. But daddy dear! He is speaking of Mickiewicz's poem, from which I read you some extracts--(With a glance at ANTONI) Pan Antoni brought it to me.

DAMAZY. Oh, sure enough!--Can you beat it? Well, I beg your pardon. (To the NOTARY) There is a notary in it too.

NOTARY. Then you know Zosia, as well.

DAMAZY. Oh yes, Zosia is in it, too.

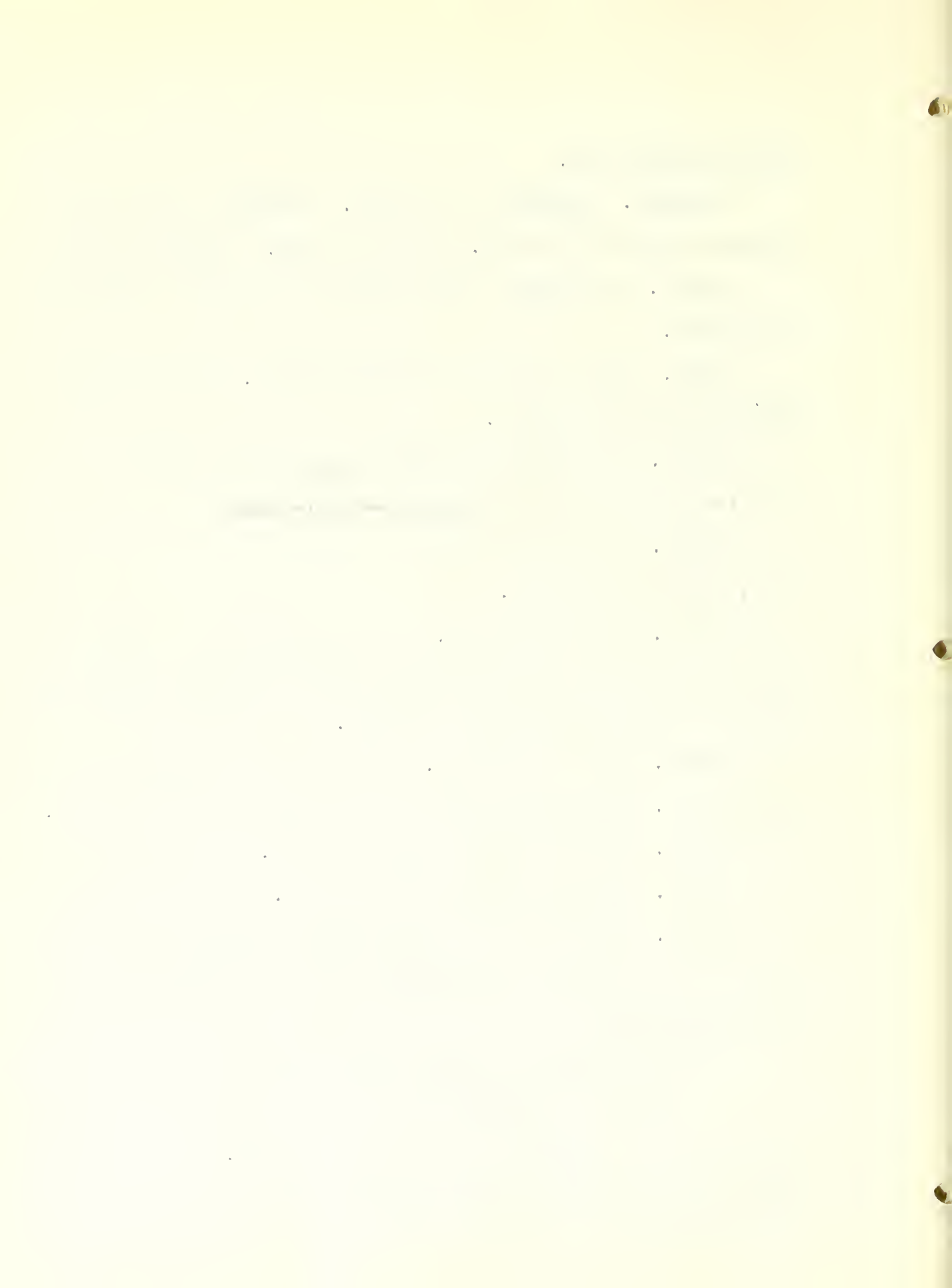
NOTARY. Will you believe me, when I saw the picture on exhibition at Warsaw, a picture of this same Zosia, showing how (declaiming):

"With pearl-white hand, from sieve, the grain she flings

Thick as a pearly hail, on heads and wings--"

in this idyll I perceived the bloodiest drama!

* Pan Tadeusz, by Mickiewicz (1798-1855), is an epic poem, the most famous work in Polish literature.



ANTONI. (Who is standing behind him leaning against the side wings for support, and intently watching HELENA, seated opposite) And why so?

NOTARY. (Turning towards him) Why? It's very plain. On the surface it is a most idealistic scene. (With a full mouth) These geese, chickens, ducks, it is all very fine; we hear Zosia calling "chick, chick, chick." But penetrating more deeply into the situation, in the spirit of a philosopher, (He drinks a glass of wine) with what purpose in view does this idyllic Zosia throw them the grain?--In order to fatten them--eh--eh--eh--And when they are fattened, with the same white finger she orders her most beautiful favorites to be killed--and that as a matter of course, in cold blood, as if someone had given her the right to do so!

DAMAZY. How's that? Then I haven't the right, bless my soul, to kill an ox when I have fattened him? That's fine! Why the devil should I give him fodder, then?

NOTARY. (With a condescending smile) My dear sir, I have no answer for that.

DAMAZY. I thought so. (He looks at him with compassion.)

ZEGOCINA. (To ANTONI, whom she has been observing impatiently) My dear Antoni, if you take the place of Seweryn, you should be more observant. You have purposely taken a position where you can make eyes at Manka.

DAMAZY. (Looking at ANTONI) Hm, hm! (MANKA looks at



ZEGOCINA in amazement.)

ZEGOCINA. And you do not observe that the notary has an empty plate?

NOTARY. (To whom ANTONI has offered a dish) Radishes! Oh no! Thanks very much, but I am a carnivorous creature. If you please, just a little salad. (He gathers it in.)

DAMAZY. (Aside) Now this one is blushing again! (Aloud) Helena, my dear, what is wrong with you?

HELENA. (Aside) Oh, plague take dad! (Rising, to MANKA) Let's go.

ZEGOCINA. You have eaten nothing.

HELENA. Thank you, auntie. (She kisses her hand, and leaves the table. Aside) I'd like to hide under the earth. He was just looking at me, not at Manka. (Putting her hand to her face) My face fairly burns.

ZEGOCINA. Well, then let's not hinder these gentlemen. (She gets up from the table, giving ANTONI a sign to fill the NOTARY'S glass.)

ANTONI. (To the NOTARY, ironically, as he fills it.) Really, sir, your views are very original and so profound that--

NOTARY. In me, sir, without boasting, lies--eh--eh--eh-- an enormous amount of material for a reformer of society, a benefactor of humanity. (He helps himself once more.)

ANTONI. Not only of humanity, but of geese, ducks, calves.

NOTARY. Joking aside, if I had a lighter pen--

ANTONI. (Walking away after filling the glass) And a heavier head--(He goes to HELENA.)

NOTARY. That's it. (After a moment, he reflects.)
What's that? (Aside) A heavier head--that sounds like sarcasm.

ZEGOCINA. (Aside) He is evidently running after her-- and Seweryn is not here. (To ANTONI, taking HELENA by the arm) Pan Antoni, you take too much upon yourself; you forget that you are in your aunt's house, and that this gentleman is her guest.

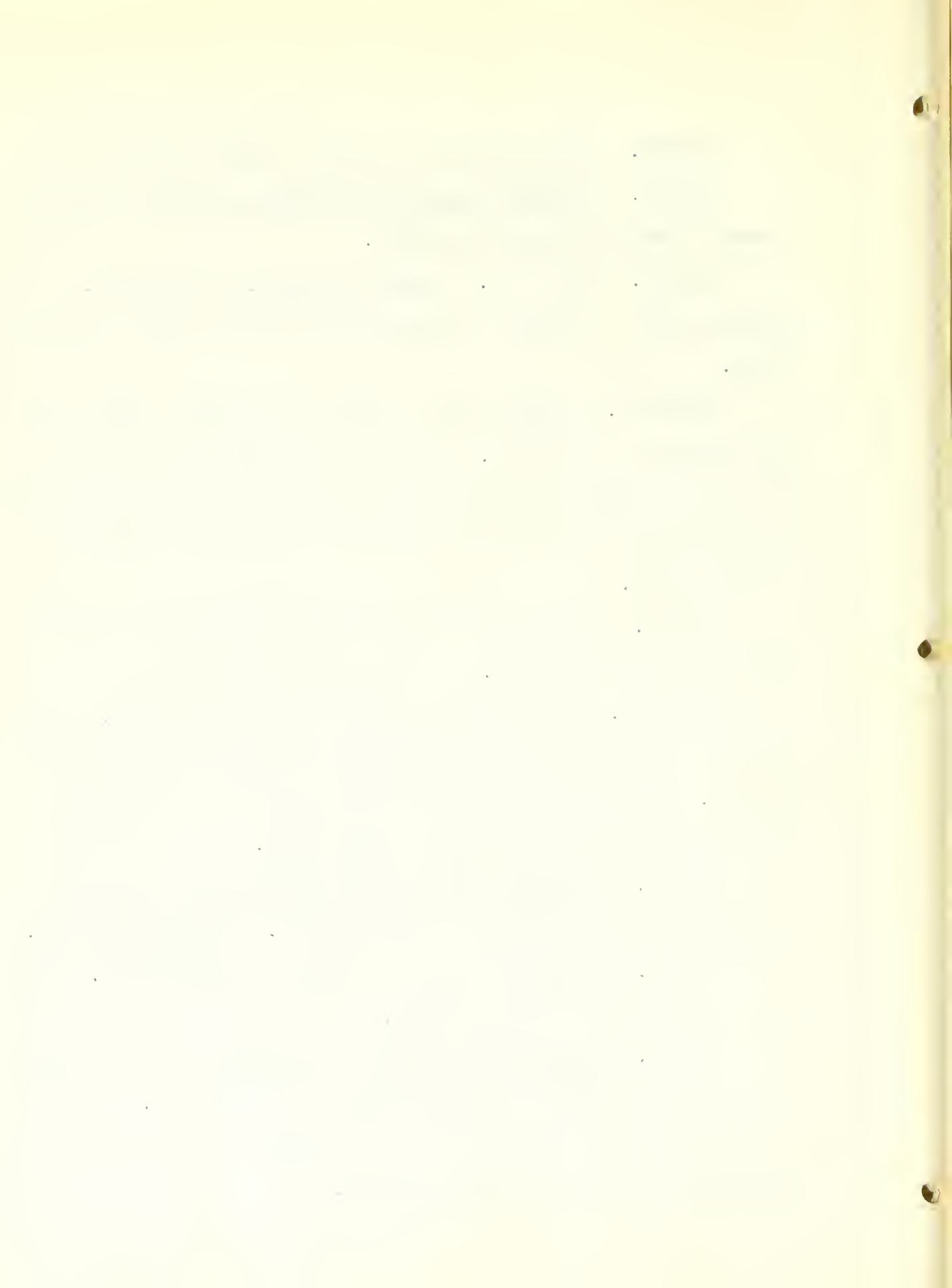
ANTONI. I did not know that this obliged me to listen patiently to such trash.

ZEGOCINA. You are too young to criticize people. (To HELENA) Come, Helena, my love, we will take a walk in the garden. (To ANTONI) Please fulfill here your position as host decently. (They go out at the right.)

DAMAZY. (Looking after them and drinking his glass hurriedly) Bless my soul, I will go too. (He follows them.)

ANTONI. (Aside) This is a clear plot against me. They won't allow me to come near her.

NOTARY. (Drinking his wine and lighting a cigar, aside) It isn't worth while to confide in such youngsters. What if I had been quick-tempered too? (He goes out at the right, casting at ANTONI a look of disdain.)



SCENE VIII

MANKA, ANTONI, JAN (clearing the table)

ANTONI. I'm no adventurer, but I'd pick a quarrel with anybody. I can't bear declamations, but I'd declaim whole tirades on the perversities of humankind. (He paces up and down.) They are turning that child's head!

MANKA. (Feverishly to JAN) Clear it off in a hurry. (She sits down thoughtfully.)

ANTONI. (Sits mechanically down near her. After a moment) Panna Marya, it seems to me that we may congratulate each other mutually; we are traveling the same path, or rather are lost on it.

MANKA. (Rousing herself from her thoughts) What did you say?

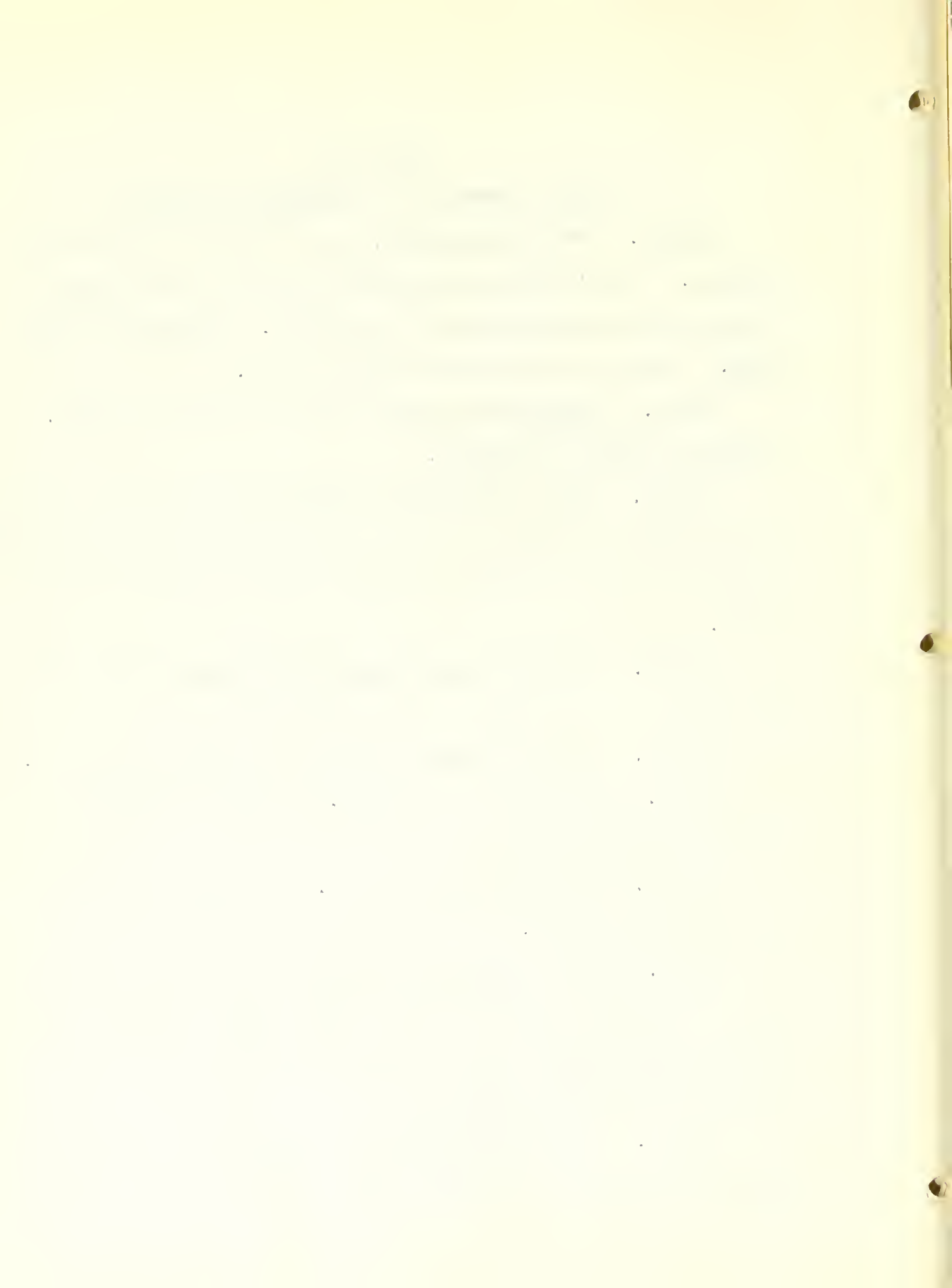
ANTONI. The same danger threatens us both--our hearts.

MANKA. (Rising) Let me alone. I don't even know whether I have a heart.

ANTONI. But you have, you have.--The fact that you can feel is proof enough.

MANKA. What I feel may be capable of pulling up by the roots everything that is rooted there. (After a moment, standing before him) Tell me, when you love truly, can you deaden your feelings within you?

ANTONI. Very sublime aims are necessary for that: for men, such an aim is a public cause, the good of the father-



land; (With irony) for women, a splendid match.

MANKA. That 's false!

ANTONI. (With a bitter smile) False?

MANKA. You are too partial a judge for us to come to an understanding.

ANTONI. (Also pacing up and down) You spoke of true love! The question is, what are the traits by which one may recognize it.

MANKA. What do you call it, for instance, when a man swears to one girl, speaks to her passionately, and reaches out for the hand of another?

ANTONI. Egotism. It is the best proof that he loves no girl at all. Life with an indifferent companion, when another woman rules his heart, would be unbearable torture.

MANKA. If he loves, he would not take such a risk.

ANTONI. I don't think so.

MANKA. A man would not trample down, would not disdain the feelings which he inspired.

ANTONI. Love without delicacy is a paradox.

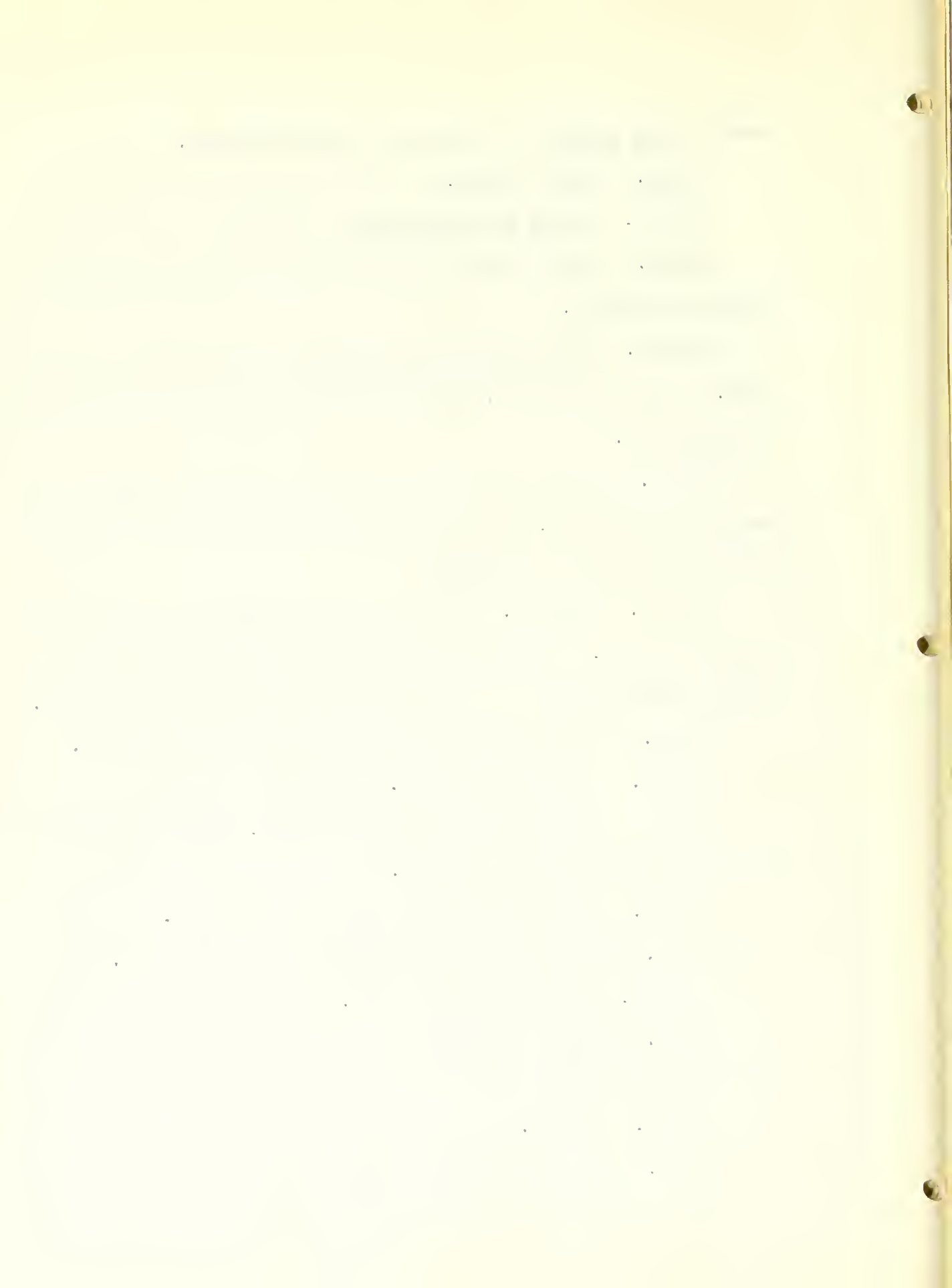
MANKA. Especially if he were very much in love.

ANTONI. It's all one to him.

MANKA. (After a moment) For such deceit, what remedy would you prescribe?

ANTONI. Forget.

MANKA. And do you know a thought more terrible than *this* that what fills our hearts must be a delusion which will



vanish away?

ANTONI. True, but that thought is a remedy that restores health.

MANKA. If it does not kill.

ANTONI. And that does happen, too, but in stories. Men and women have more endurance.

MANKA. (To herself) Then he isn't in love!

ANTONI. At any rate, the sooner the better. A smaller dose will cure.

MANKA. (To herself) Oh, I hate him! (She takes out the rose from her corsage and after a momentary struggle throws it away.)

ANTONI. And what will become of my own dreams?--Everything seems like a soap bubble--so much happiness, which will vanish like a dream.

SCENE IX

GENIO, MANKA, ANTONI

GENIO. (Coming in from the rear, with an umbrella and with an overcoat over his arm) Here, at any rate, I'll find somebody--(Approaching) Some country girl and her swain. I'll wager they're not lovers, for they're not looking at each other; then they're either brother and sister or husband and wife. After a moment, they don't see me.

MANKA. (After a moment, rousing herself from her thoughts)
Pan Antoni!



GENIO. Hm, hm!

MANKA. Ah!

GENIO. Peculiar circumstances force me to introduce myself. (Aside) She's very pretty. (Aloud) I am Eugene Bajdalski. I arrive on purpose to--

ANTONI. Genio! Bajdalski, my dear fellow! I see, I see! Why the deuce didn't I recognize you at once!

GENIO. Well, well, Antoni, old boy! You know, this is a good one. How are you?

ANTONI. How are you? (They embrace each other.)

GENIO. (To MANKA) We were at school together on the same bench, my dear young lady--

ANTONI. But what brings you here to my aunt's?

GENIO. Why, are we at your aunt's? I didn't know it. (Aside) Mighty pretty. (Aloud) Just imagine, I arrive by the straight road, like fish by express.

ANTONI. Where from?

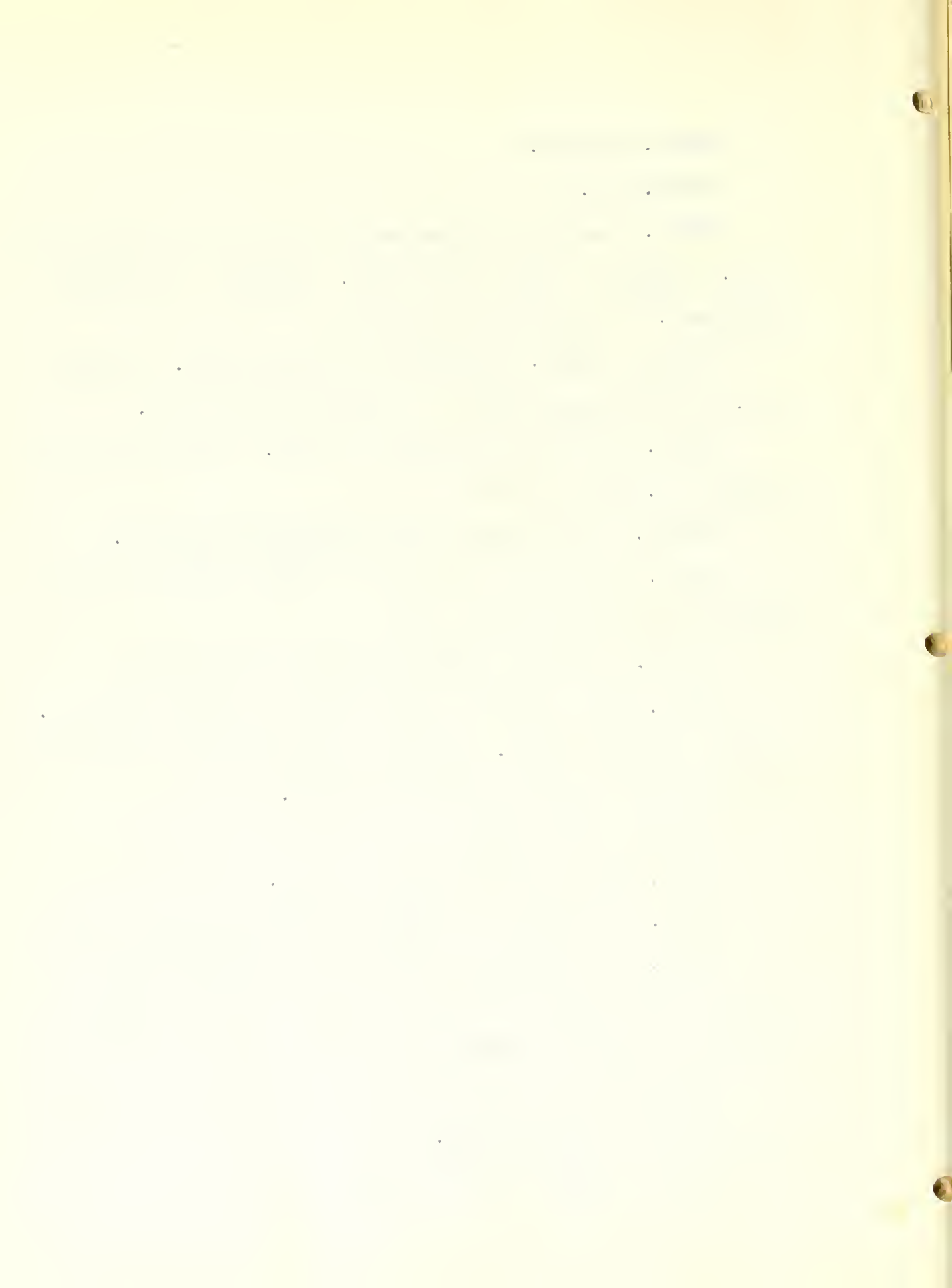
GENIO. Why, from Warsaw, of course.

MANKA. If that's the case, you certainly must be hungry?

GENIO. Ah, how well you know how to read my--my--
(Aside) I've begun to chatter, but never mind. (Aloud)
Really, to tell the truth--

MANKA. I will order them to get something ready this very moment. (She goes out.)

GENIO. (Aside) She's a peach, on my soul!



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SCENE X

GENIO, ANTONI

ANTONI. Then you came from Warsaw?

GENIO. And in fact, on very important business. Isn't my old man here, perhaps?

ANTONI. What old man?

GENIO. Why, the pater.

ANTONI. What? Oh! Then Notary Bajdalski is your father?

GENIO. And, on the other hand, I am his son.

ANTONI. So?

GENIO. Does that surprise you? What's so unusual about that?

ANTONI. Who says there is?

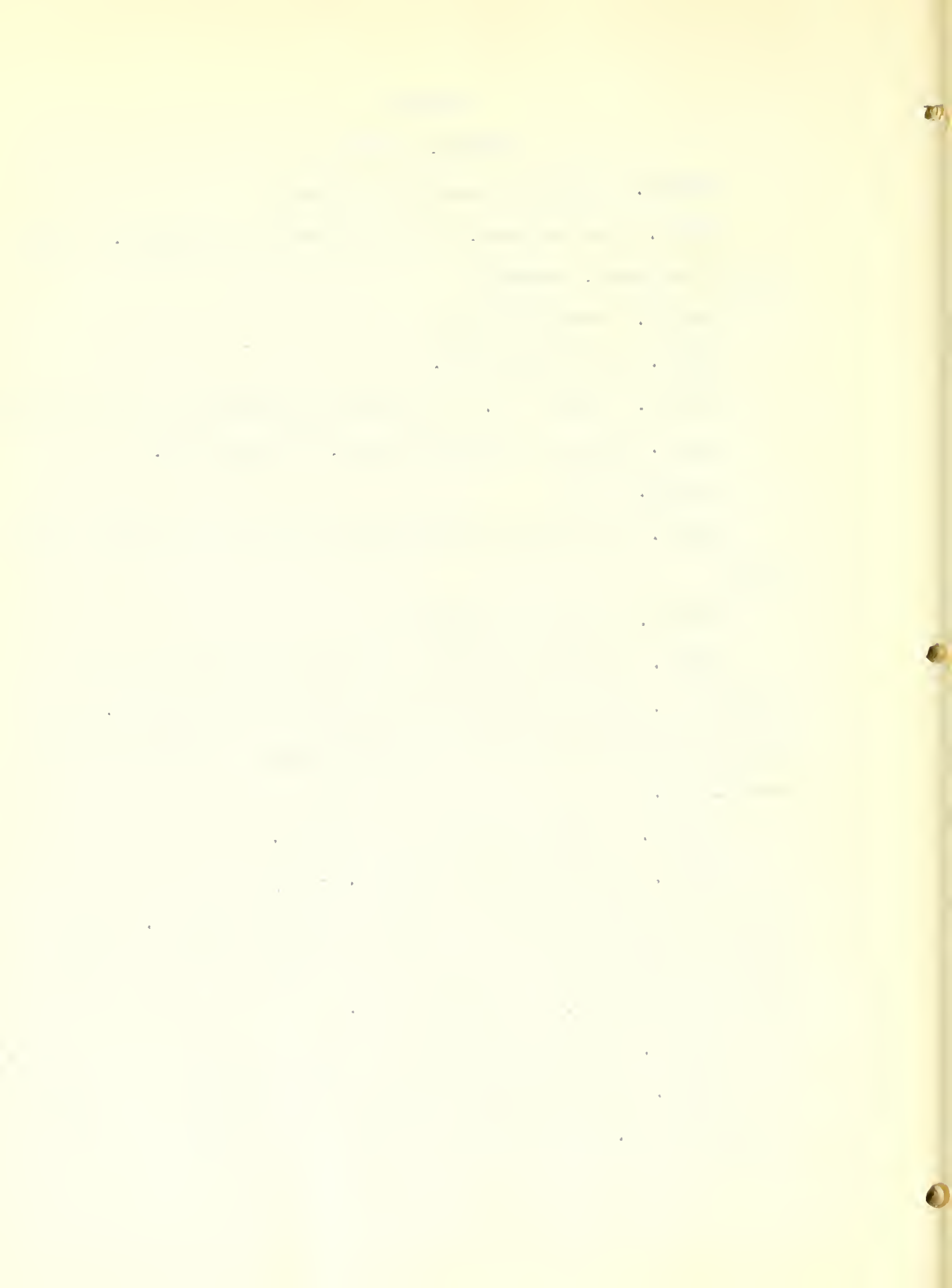
GENIO. Although really, just off-hand, no one would suspect it. The old man has got seedy in the country.--And what are you doing here? (Compassionately) You're getting seedy, too.

ANTONI. I have a farm, I'm working.

GENIO. "I'm working, working."--They are fine with their work on the farm, just to make an impression on us.--Bartek plows, Bartek sows, and later things grow by themselves--and they call it work.--Give me a kiss.

ANTONI. You always were, and you still are a chatterbox.

GENIO. The Bajdalskis have been chatterboxes for generations: I glory in it.--But after all, what do you think? The Bajdalski



family is an old noble family, so old that they aren't even mentioned in the heraldry.

ANTONI. You donkey!

SCENE XI

The same, the NOTARY

NOTARY. (Breathless) When did you arrive, without my hearing of it? How are you?

GENIO. (Kissing him on the shoulder) How am I? First of all, I'm hungry as a dog, but I've already found a guardian angel, who has given me a gleam of hope.

NOTARY. (In his ear) Did you get the telegram?

GENIO. (Likewise; in a joking tone) No.

ANTONI. You gentlemen certainly have something to talk over between you. I'll not hinder you. (He goes out.)

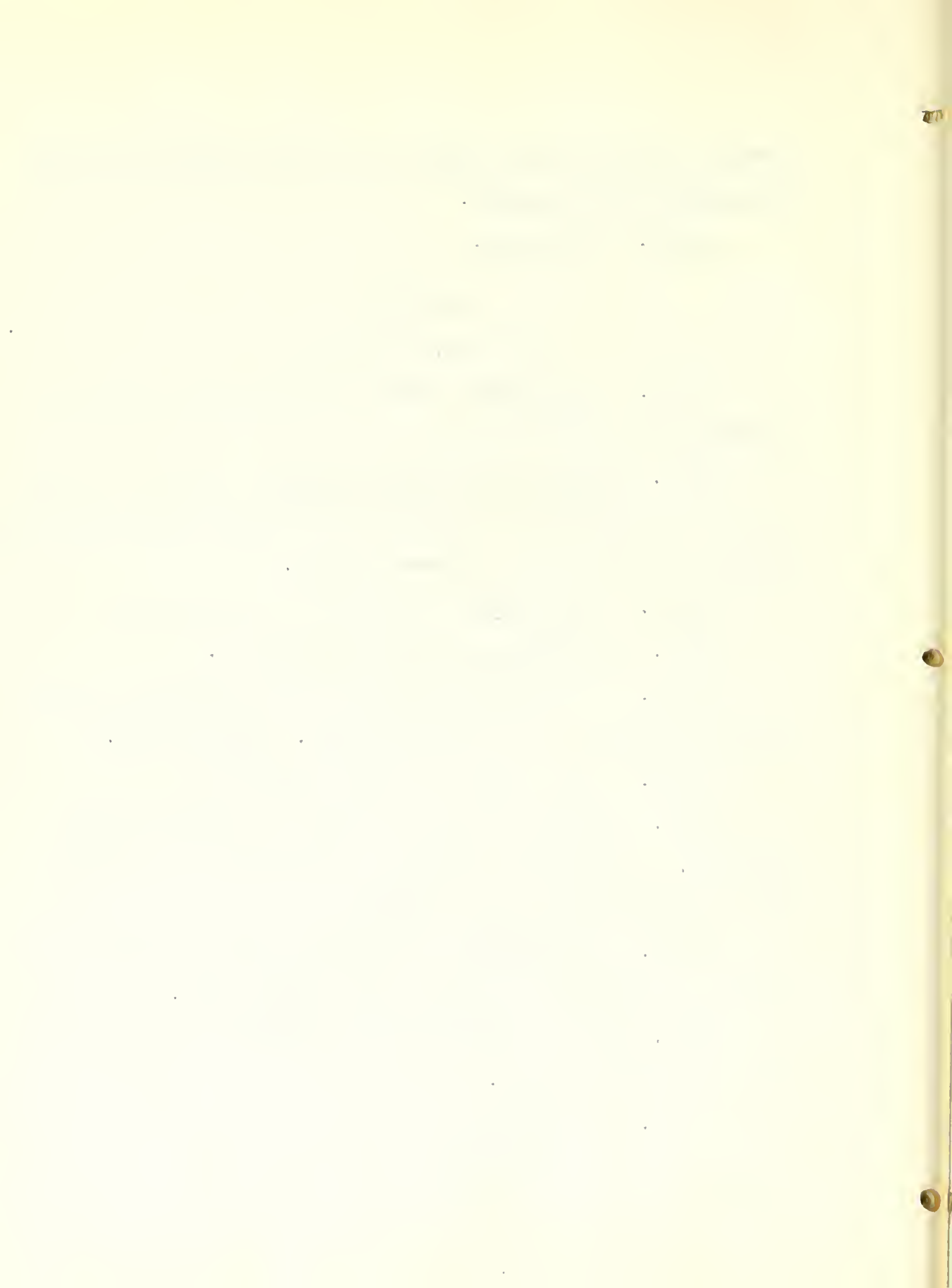
NOTARY. What's that? You didn't get it?

GENIO. Father, I see you have lost the habit of exact thinking. But where's your logic? Why should I have come if I had not received the telegram?

NOTARY. (Impatiently) Please don't make a fool of yourself, I see that you haven't yet lost that habit.

GENIO. But you are expressing yourself in an unparliamentary fashion, father.

NOTARY. (As before) Listen, keep your jests to yourself. It's all right in our own beer parties, but not here, and not at this time, when it's a question of things of the highest



importance. (After a moment, looking around) Do you know why I have brought you here?

GENIO. I do.

NOTARY. (Amazed) You know! Who told you?

GENIO. (Laughing) I've caught you again, father!

NOTARY. (Impatiently) Stop joking, for heaven's sake; stop joking!

GENIO. Well, then, I am listening. What's up?

NOTARY. (Looking around) There's a girl here, an heiress.

GENIO. Oh, I know it, I know it.

NOTARY. You know that already?

GENIO. That is, I know that there is a girl, but I didn't know she was an heiress.--So much the better.

NOTARY. (Impatiently) But who told you? How do you know? Tell me!

GENIO. I've seen her. She's a marvel!

NOTARY. What are you chattering about? Where did you see her? Just now I left her in the garden.

GENIO. Well, there must be two of them, for a moment ago there was one here, and--

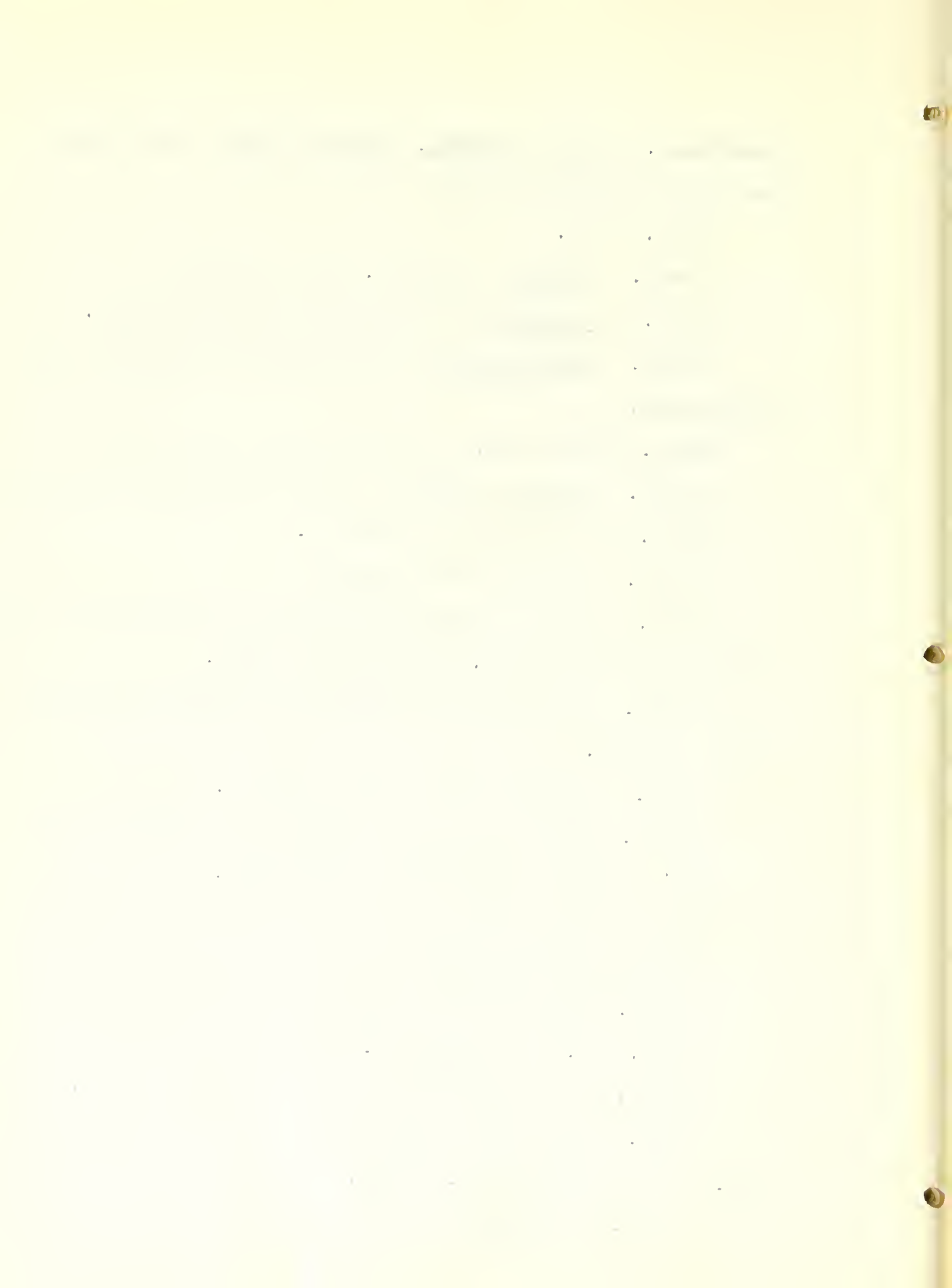
NOTARY. Stupid--that one isn't worth counting.

GENIO. Oh! You don't say! And why?

NOTARY. She is poor and a sort of orphan, a waif.

GENIO. What's that got to do with it? Mere prejudices--bah!--I don't understand, father.

NOTARY. (Tearfully) How he chatters! How he chatters!

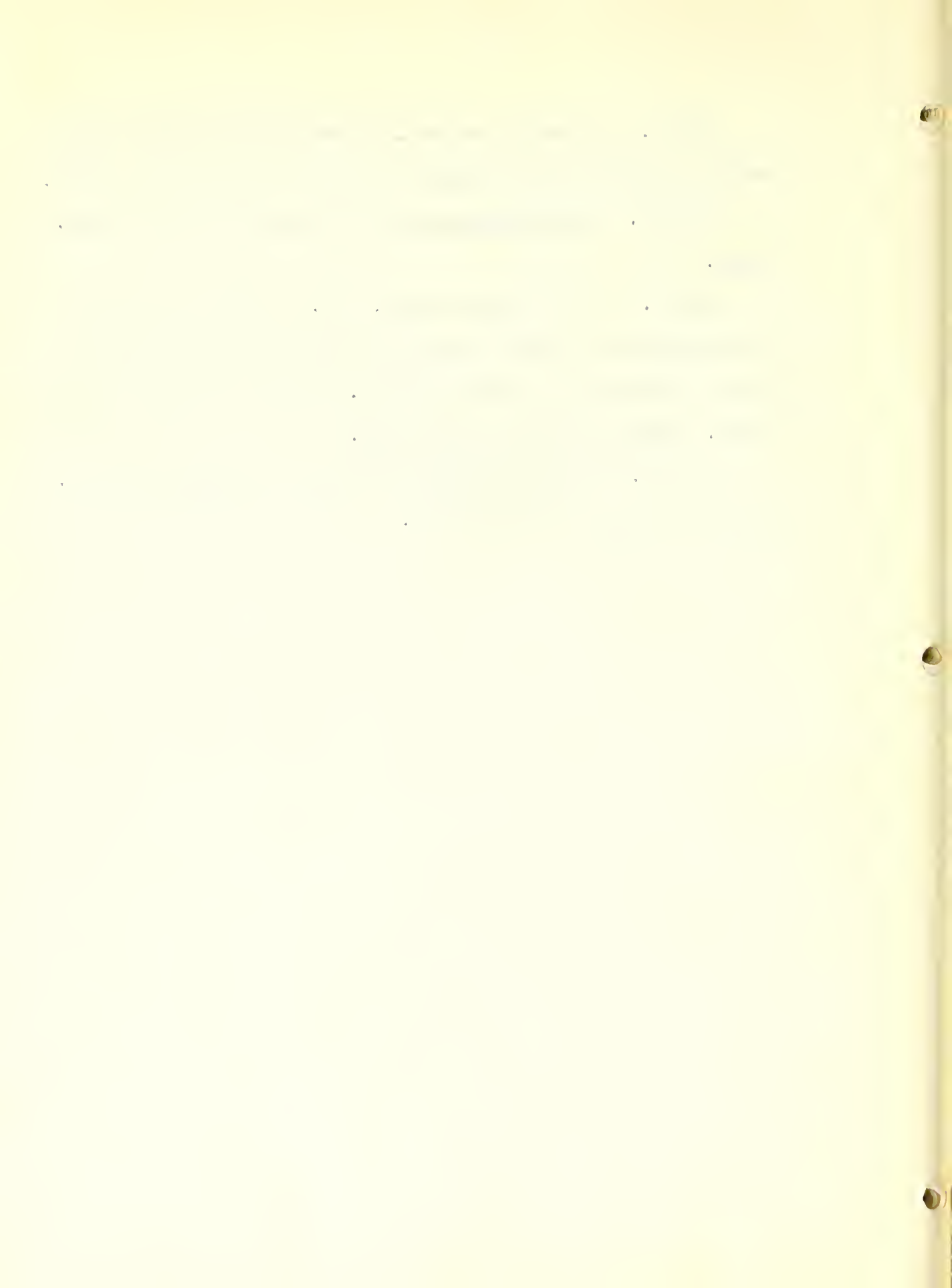


GENIO. If there are two, my choice is already made-- unless the other one pleases me still more, which I doubt.

NOTARY. (Contemptuously) And you are a positivist! Shame!

GENIO. Of the purest sort, dad. I don't count my chickens before they're hatched; and when I am hungry, I have a loathing for dissertations.--Oh, I see some company there. (He goes out at the right.)

NOTARY. (Following him) But wait, you scatterbrain!-- Eh--eh--eh--he's a positivist!



ACT III

Another room; three doors, one in the rear, two at the sides.

On the right side, towards the front, a sofa; in the back at the left, a greenery.

SCENE I

SEWERYN, HELENA, seated beside each other on the sofa; later
ZEGOCINA, the NOTARY.

SEWERYN. (Lolling, toying with the string of his glasses,
with a disdainful attitude) Evidently you refuse to understand me.

HELENA. (Busy with a flower, which she holds in her hand)
I beg your pardon, but the very curiosity that they attribute to us women, might awaken that desire in me--but there are things that it is impossible to understand.

SEWERYN. You cavil at words. It may be that I expressed myself badly; I ought to have said: you are pretending that you don't understand me.

HELENA. (Offended) Pretending!

SEWERYN. Then let us abandon this word-play: allow me please to explain myself more clearly.

HELENA. (Taking a more favorable position at the other end of the couch and looking boldly into his eyes) I am listening!

SEWERYN. You know that your father, and my aunt likewise, have the idea--of our union.



HELENA. So it seems.

(At this moment, ZEGOCINA and the NOTARY enter from the door at the left. seeing the tête-à-tête, ZEGOCINA makes a happy gesture, detaining the NOTARY, who wants to go farther; finally she pulls him after her and they retreat on their tip-toes. The NOTARY, leaving unwillingly, casts at them a discontented glance.--this action takes place independently of the conversation that is going on.)

SEWERYN. Seeing that you know this, then you must understand that all that I have said, was related to this principal question.

HELENA. I guessed that very easily, but I am entirely unable to understand some other things.

SEWERYN. For instance?

HELENA. For instance, in what way this project of our guardians can bind us or influence^e us in our actions.

SEWERYN. (Astonished) How's that?

HELENA. (In a bantering tone) I think that, first of all, we should inquire of our hearts, whether they are in sympathy with each other.

SEWERYN. Have you asked yourself this question?

HELENA. (As before) And you?

SEWERYN. I? (Aside) Is she so naïve¹, or is she sly? (Aloud) That's a great idea! It seems to me that, by beginning a conversation on this subject, I have already



answered that question on my own side.

HELENA. (With an ironical smile, picking at her flower)
That's peculiar--we have known each other for just two days.

SEWERYN. Do you not believe, I will not say in love,
but in attraction at first sight?

HELENA. Oh, why not?

SEWERYN. (With a bow) In that case you should easily
explain my step to yourself, a step on which I decided the
more readily because it coincided with my aunt's will.

HELENA. (After a moment of silence) I might be able
to explain this strange attraction to myself, if only--

SEWERYN. Strange?

HELENA. I beg your pardon for the expression, but
really it seems strange to me.

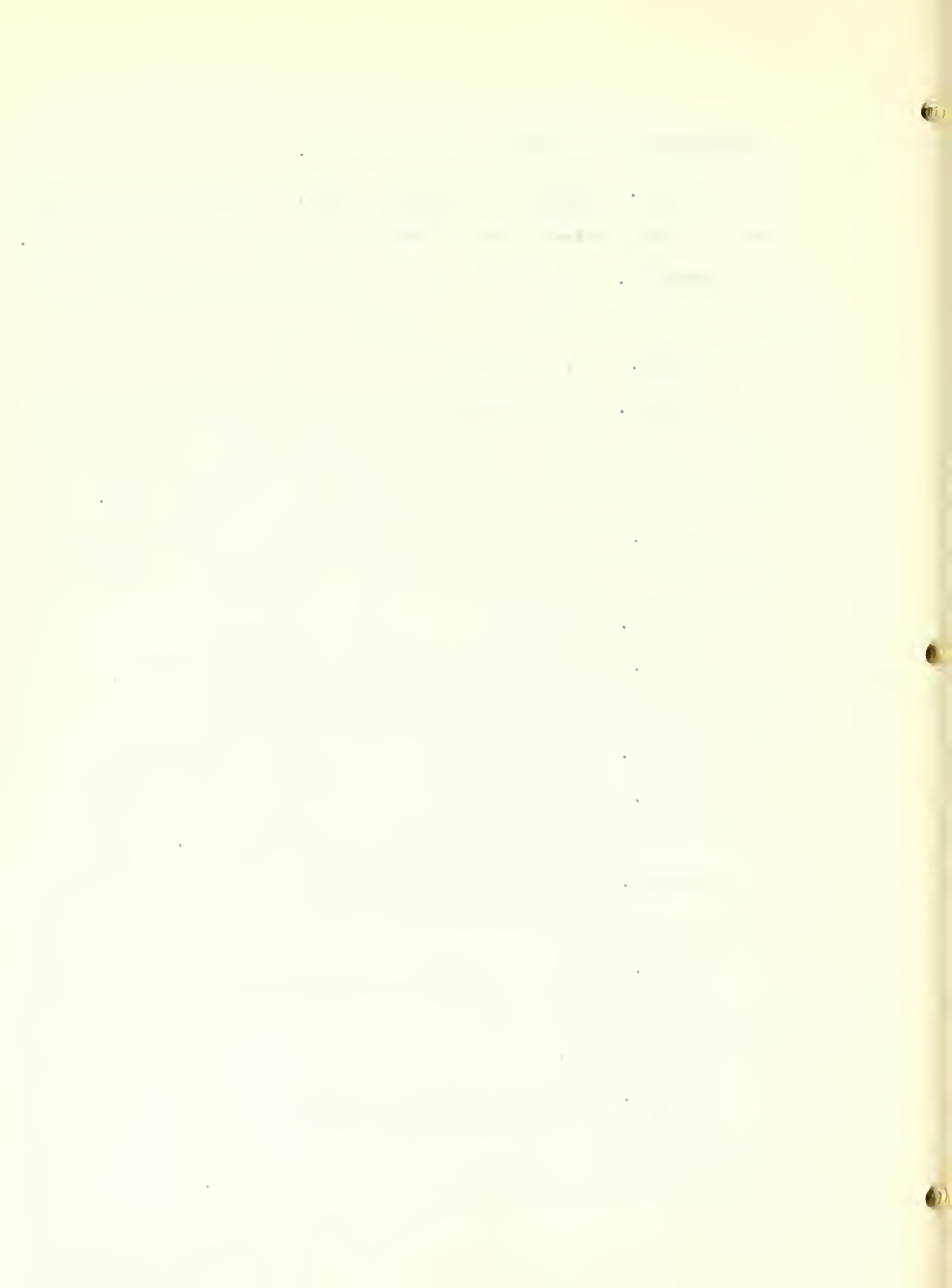
SEWERYN. Why?

HELENA. Because, as far as I can see, there could
yield to it only a heart that was entirely free.

SEWERYN. (Looking at her askance) What leads you to
conclude that mine is occupied?

HELENA. (After a moment, striking the arm of the sofa
with the palm of her hand) Then give me your word of honor
that it is not so.

SEWERYN. (After a moment, ironically) Honor? Let me
tell you that this is the first time I have ever heard such
a guarantee requested in affairs of the heart.



HELENA. (Rising) Then one might infer from that, that these are the only affairs in which it is not binding.

SEWERYN. (Aside, rising) Oh, that's bad; I see already the work of Manka.

NOTARY. (Coming in hurriedly from the center door, aside) I had hard work to get away from the woman. (Going directly to SEWERYN) Oh! oh! oh! I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon most humbly; I did not know that I was interrupting such a pleasant--eh--eh--eh--tête-à-tête. (He takes him by the arm.)

HELENA. (Offended) Why tête-à-tête? You must be joking!

NOTARY. You must forgive me for taking Pan Seweryn away, but rather important business--

HELENA. Go ahead and take him. That's fine!

NOTARY. I know that I am causing you annoyance by this, but--

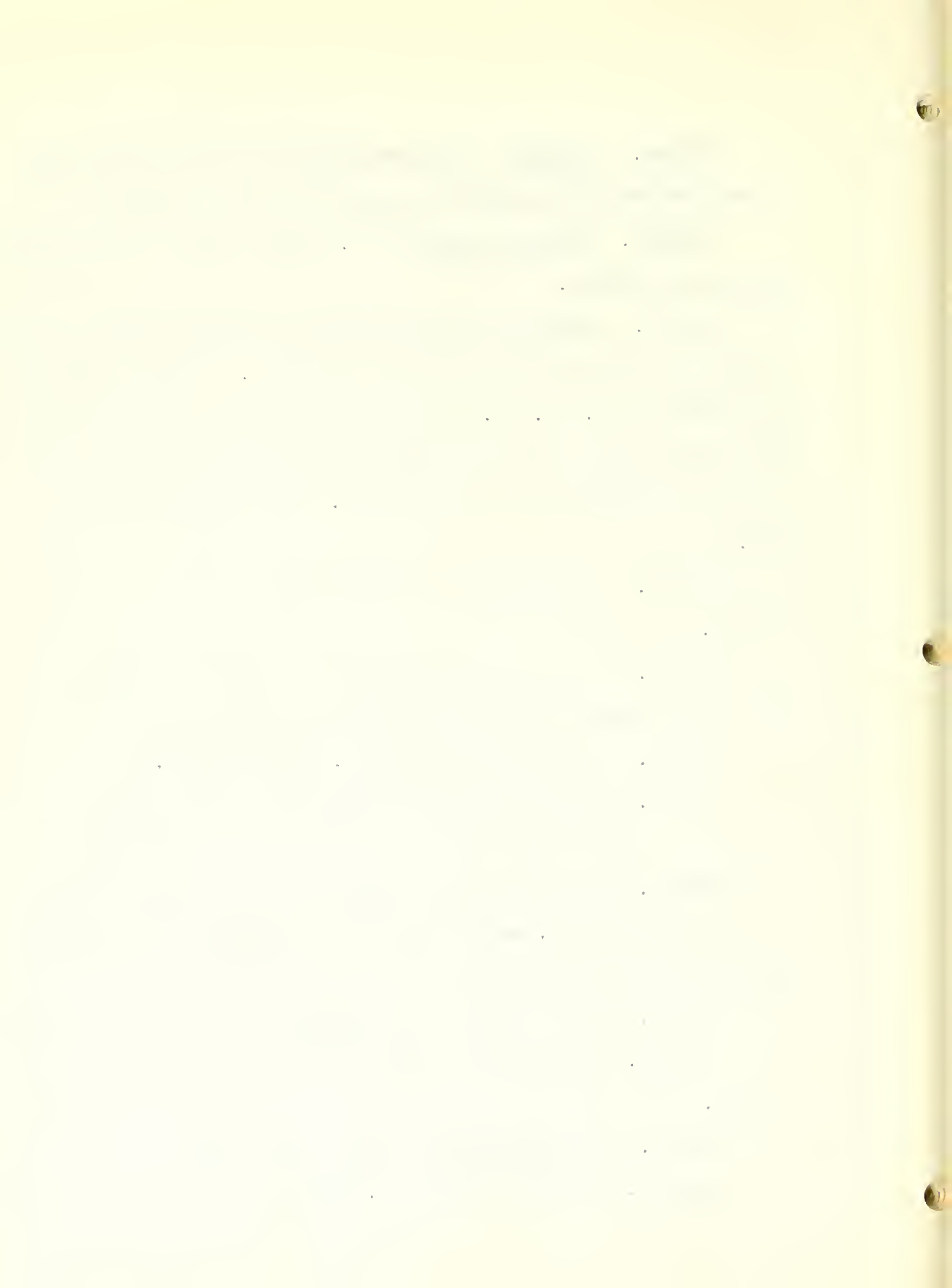
HELENA.. My dear sir, it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference to me.--What of it? (Shrugging her shoulders, she goes to the greenery)

NOTARY. (To SEWERYN) I am helping you as well as I can--

SEWERYN. (Gloomily) Rather you are purposely spoiling things.

NOTARY. (Good-humoredly) Why, how's that?

SEWERYN. It looks like that--What sort of business is it?



NOTARY. A little conference with your aunt, at which your presence is required, Pan Seweryn. (To HELENA) I beg your pardon most humbly. (They go out at the left.)

SCENE II

HELENA, alone

HELENA. (Looking after them and shrugging her shoulders) Queer freak! (After a moment) But I've grown three feet in my own eyes.--It seems to me that I played my part well.--I gave it to him about Manka!--Oh, my sweet boy, it seemed to you that you had struck a country lamb, whom you might deceive easily.--Hm!--Of course!--(After a moment) But truly, what started me off like this? I don't recognize myself--for at the beginning, having a presentiment of what he would talk about, on my honor, I felt really frightened, just as that time when Antoni proposed to me.--But what a difference! That time both of us trembled like leaves. I don't know about him, but I didn't see a thing before me--not even him.--But this man--he gave me a chill somehow!--The abominable actor! (After a moment) Ha! ha! ha! He spoke of attraction at first sight; he thought that he would disarm me by that.--Eh, it's evident that if you are indifferent, a man is not the least bit dangerous. (With her arms folded across her bosom, she paces up and down across the stage with proud steps.)



SCENE III

HELENA, PAN DAMAZY

DAMAZY. (With his pipe, comes in^{at} the central^{er} doors); seeing HELENA, he stops and follows her with his eyes. She goes up and down a few times, seeing nothing; then catching sight of him, when he has drawn nearer, she stops before him, curtesying and clapping her hands with indications of joy. He takes her by the arm.) It's very well that I have caught you here alone; we have a bone to pick with each other, bless my soul.

HELENA. (Aside) Oho!

DAMAZY. Sit down. (They go to the sofa.)

HELENA. (Sitting down in the same place as before, aside)
There will be another scene.

DAMAZY. I must have a talk with you once for all; once for all, as the Lord has commanded.

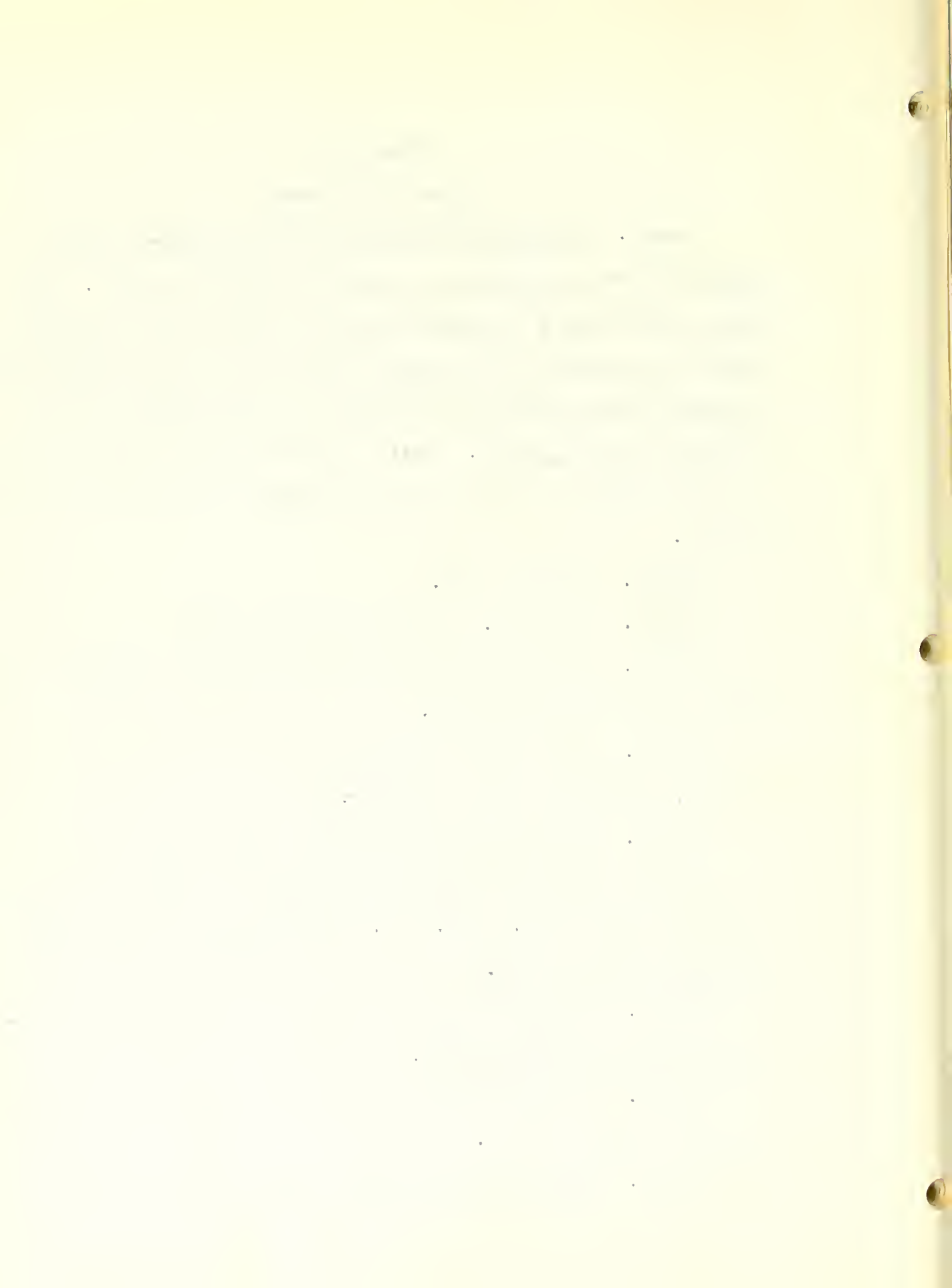
HELENA. (With mock seriousness) What about?

DAMAZY (Gruffly, tapping his foot) What airs are these! Listen to what I say! Yes! Oh! (He takes her by the arm and seats her near him.)

HELENA. (Aside) Oh, it's going to be worse with daddy. (Kissing his hand stealthily.)

DAMAZY. My dear child, I would rather have ten boys than one girl, bless my soul.

HELENA. (In a coaxing manner) What? Me? Me? And



you say that to me, daddy?

DAMAZY. Yes, I say it, and I won't take it back!

HELENA. (As before) Why?

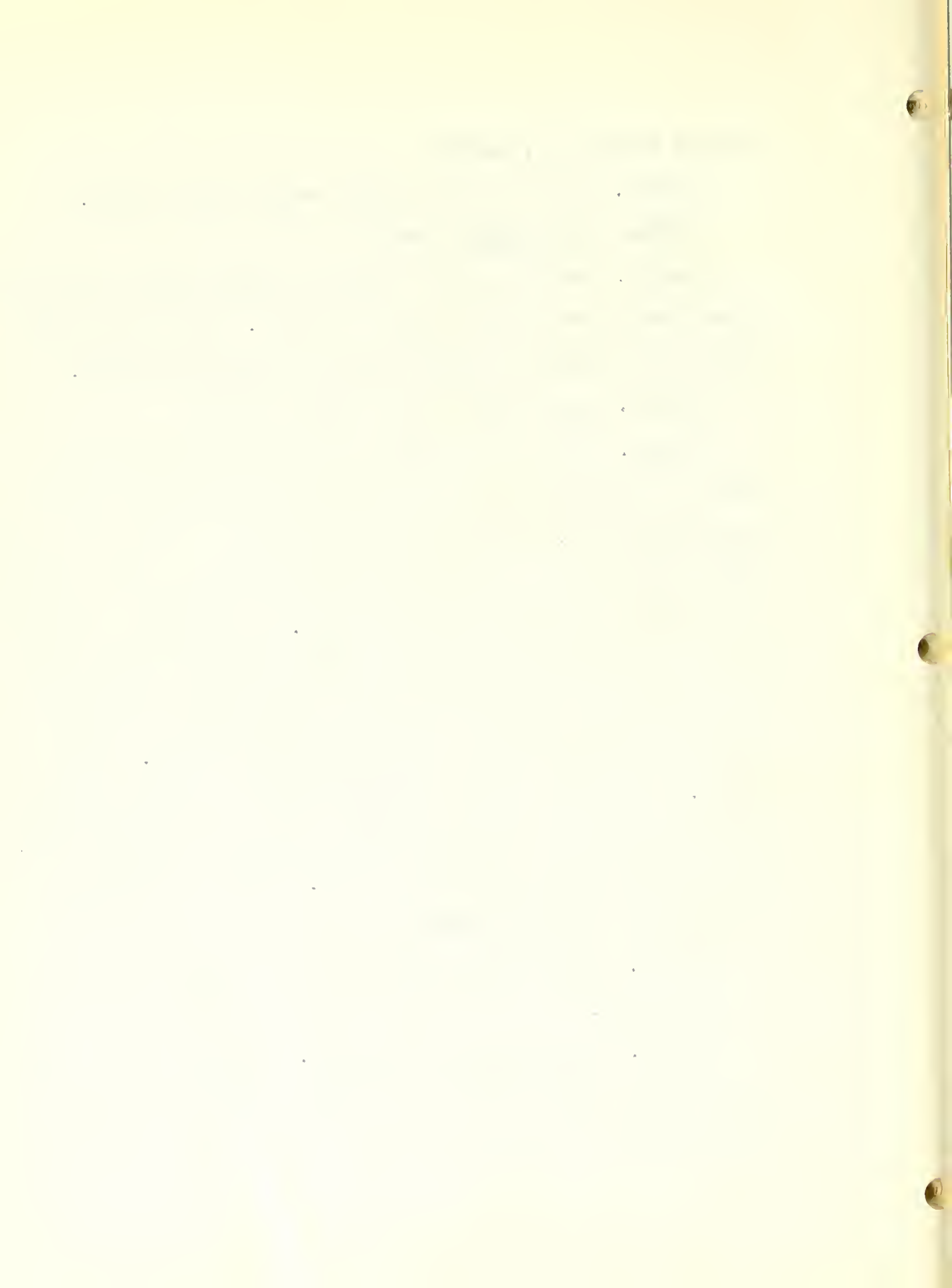
DAMAZY. Well, because I have so much trouble with you-- I don't know how to act or what to think. First there was Pan Antoni, then Pan Seweryn, and now Pan Antoni again!

HELENA. How's that? Am I such a flirt?

DAMAZY. Oh, let me alone, for with these caresses I shall be no wiser than I was--and I must know once for all how things stand.--First Pan Antoni began to visit us; I saw immediately that it was not for nothing, and that you seemed to like him. (HELENA lowers her eyes.) I thought to myself: hm, an honest fellow; he doesn't have much, it's true, but he's industrious, thrifty; if this should come to anything, then God's will be done! (HELENA kisses his hand.) Now please!--I tried to sound you out, I asked you outright, How about this Antoni, bless my soul? and you, (Imitating) "Ts! ts! For heaven's sake, how should I know!" More of the same, and then expect me to understand!

HELENA. (In a pained voice) You are always this way with me, daddy.

DAMAZY. (Impatiently) Be quiet! Listen. Then I persuaded myself that so far as you were concerned it was only fiddle-faddle, bless my soul, and that you would get him out



of your head easily, if something better came along. Therefore, since your aunt for the sake of sacred harmony, proposed to give me a part of the estate and Seweryn for a son-in-law, I accepted.

HELENA. How was that possible?

DAMAZY. What's that? Why, I asked you and you agreed.

HELENA. What? You asked me about it?

DAMAZY. Now just look at her! Didn't I ask you plainly: "How does Seweryn suit you?" Those very words.--And what did you say?

HELENA. What could I say?

DAMAZY. You see, that's the way you are!--Didn't you say that he was good-looking? Tell me!

HELENA. Well, he is good-looking; he's not humpbacked, blind, or lame.

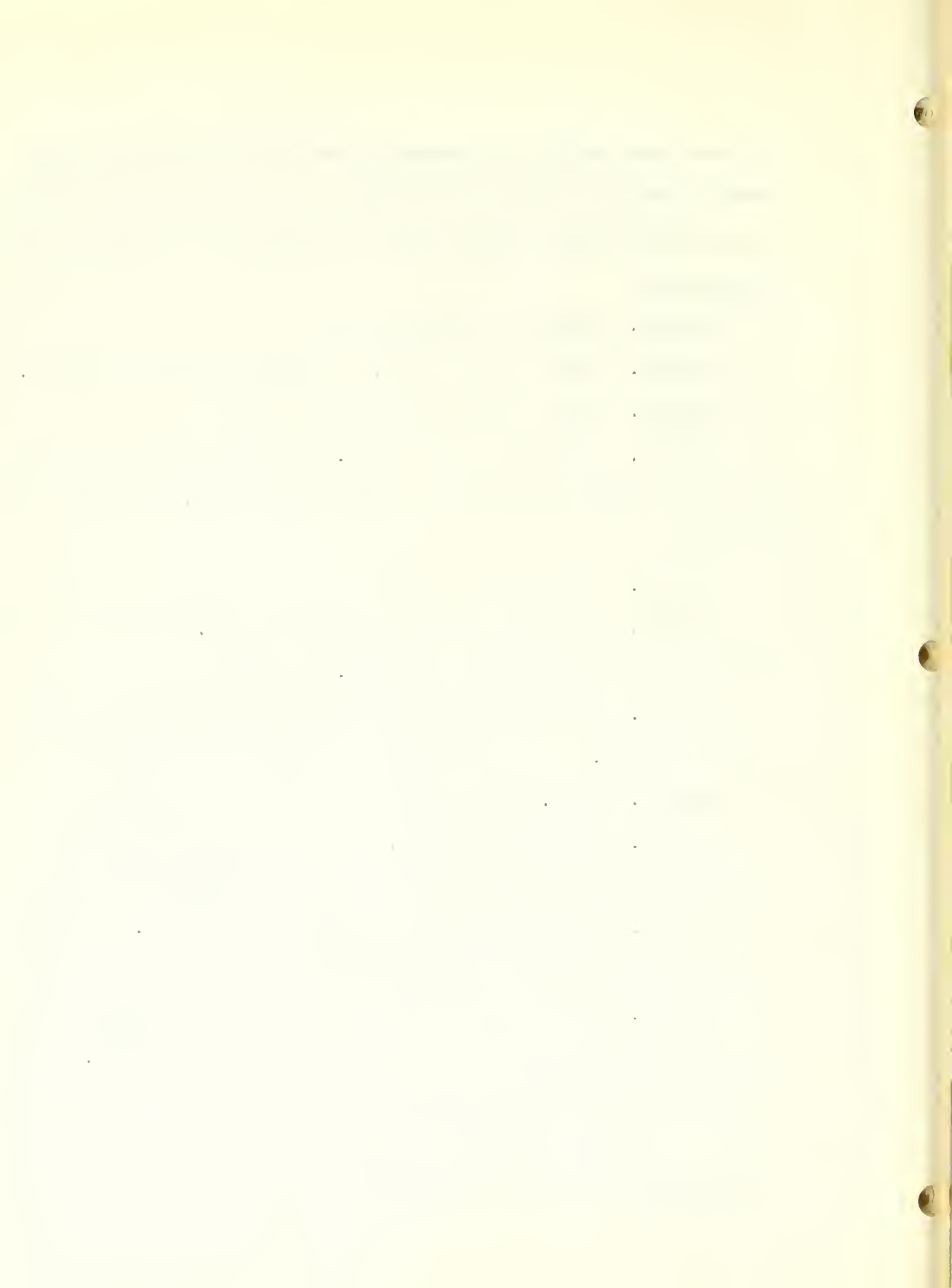
DAMAZY. Well!

HELENA. But what of that. You should have asked me plainly, daddy: "Should you like him for a husband?"

DAMAZY. (Twiddling his fingers) Hm, hm, hm! Couldn't you have guessed why I was asking you?

HELENA. I beg your pardon, daddy, you only asked if he was good-looking, just as you would about anybody else. And if I answered that he was good-looking, why, that's a remarkable thing, I suppose! There are so many good-looking people.

(Caressingly) Aren't you good-looking, too, daddy?



DAMAZY. Well, well. (Aside) What trick is she up to now? (Aloud) All in all, I thought that he pleased you, and therefore I was not opposed, bless my soul.--Meantime, yesterday at lunch, I looked at you; and you were as cross with him as if you had drunk vinegar.--But that's nothing. Now this morning--

HELENA. (Throwing herself on his neck, ashamed) Daddy!

DAMAZY. So you see, you're ashamed. I came upon you in the garden with Antoni, and I saw him kissing your hands.

HELENA. Only once or twice.

DAMAZY. (Softened) How could you allow it?

HELENA. (After a moment, hiding her head on his breast)
If I love him--

DAMAZY. (After a moment) Aha, you love him! That's another thing. (Rising) Well, you see, you couldn't tell me that immediately.

HELENA. (Rising, aside) Well, well, I've got my breath!--
Once more I don't know where I got such courage.

DAMAZY. (Pacing up and down) Hm, hm, I am curious to know what to do now.--

HELENA. (In a pleading tone) Let's go home.

DAMAZY. Really! What did we come here for! (Pacing up and down, after a moment) But my child, it might be worth while to consider.--Hm, hm, as you see, this estate--that would be worth something.

HELENA. What's the estate to me!



DAMAZY. Ah, of course! That's the way they talk, and later, do what you wish--sit and cry! (After a moment) And finally, how can we give such a downright answer to your aunt, when I have already half accepted her.--You have put me in a tight fix.

HELENA. I'll tell you how, daddy: first of all, diplomatically.

DAMAZY. Well, for example?

HELENA. Be polite with auntie, nice, but non-committal.

DAMAZY. (Ironically) Aha!

HELENA. And meanwhile, at the first chance, take to our heels, and let her do as she pleases!

DAMAZY. (As before) Fine diplomacy! She has a head like Bismarck, bless my soul!

HELENA. And when we are home, you will write a nice letter, daddy.

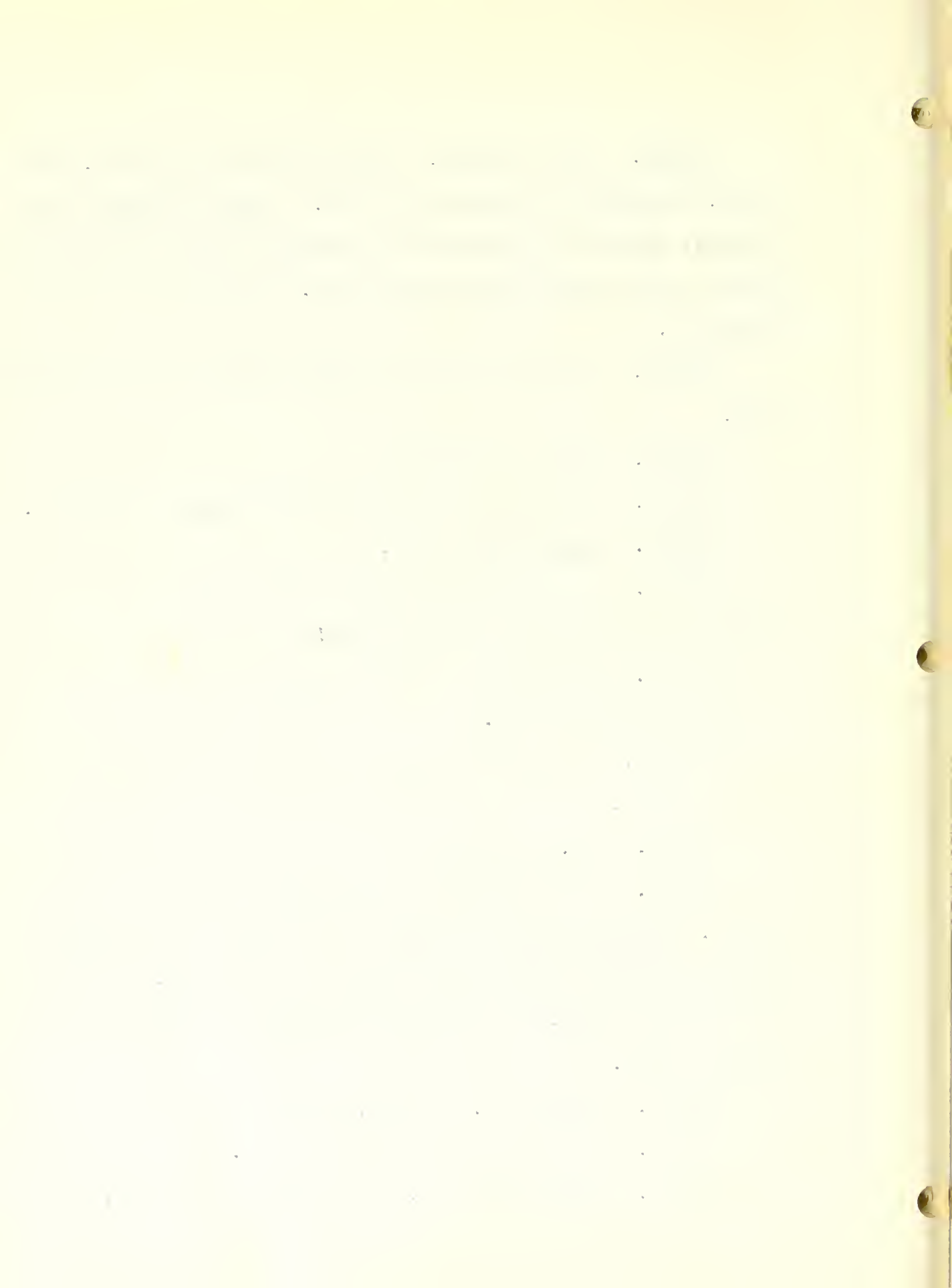
DAMAZY. Oho! You don't catch me doing that.

HELENA. We'll both of us compose it, we'll ask Fran Antoni. (Looking him in the eyes. All right? (DAMAZY says nothing; he only thoughtfully twirls his mustache.) Well, then its all right.--(Clapping her hands) Now we've only to pack our bags.

DAMAZY. Wait, wait! Slowly, we'll see.

HELENA. What do you mean by "we'll see."

DAMAZY. Well, we'll see. (He paces up and down.)



HELENA. No, no, right away. Daddy is always too ready to think things over.--^{Not much!}Nix! (She runs out at the right, meeting the NOTARY, who bows and greets her with a movement of his hand.)

SCENE IV.

PAN DAMAZY, the NOTARY.

DAMAZY. (Absorbed in thought) My poor kiddie! How much worry I have about her future! (After a moment) They say that money is a trifle; but, just the same, if I had a good dowry for her, it seems to me that I should rest easier.

NOTARY. (Who has tarried a moment in the rear, looking longingly after HELENA, drawing near) What a comfort to have such a daughter!

DAMAZY. Hm! Comfort!--More trouble, bless my soul!

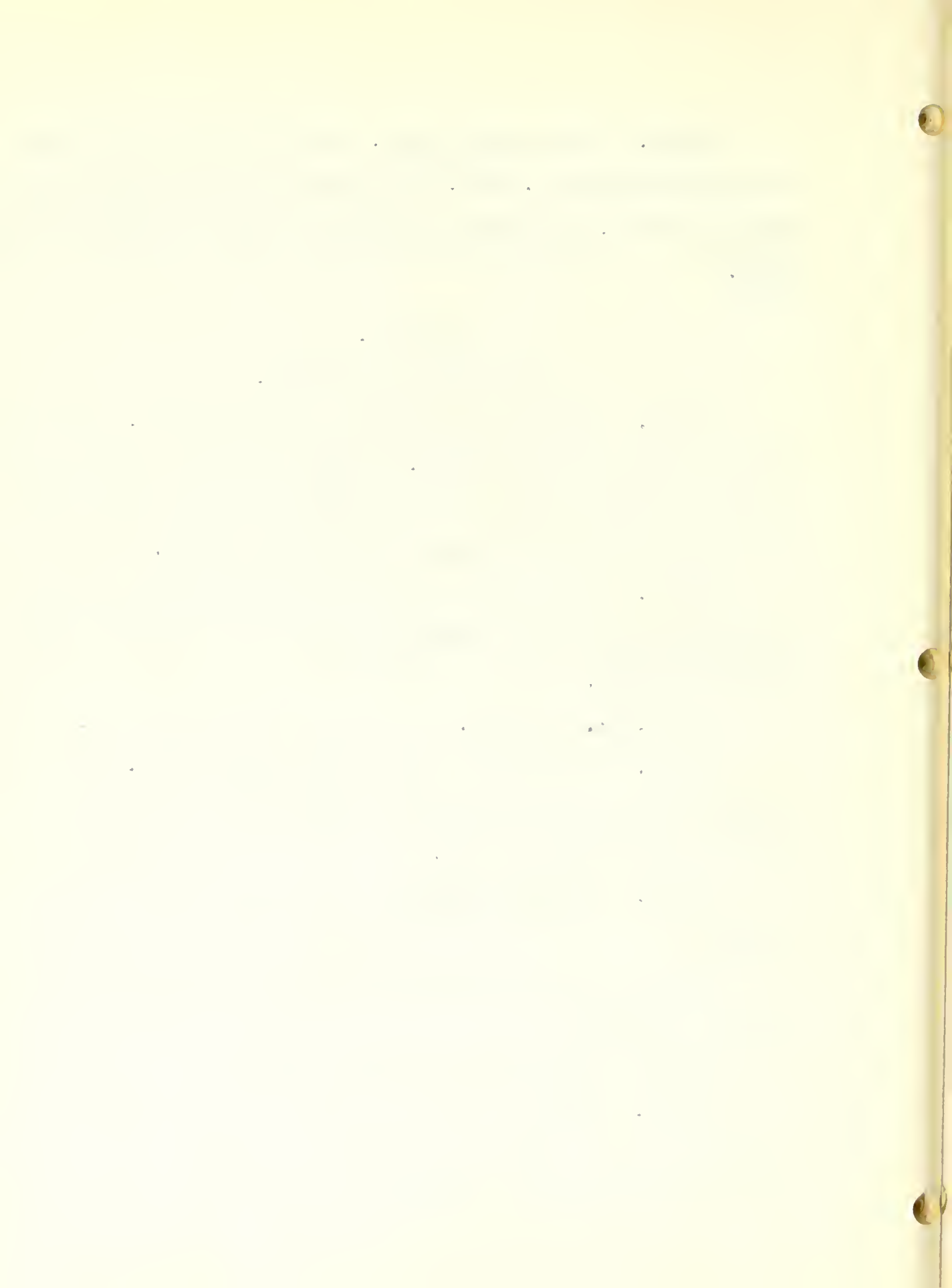
NOTARY. I look with delight upon Panna Helena. Such harmonious--eh--eh--eh--beauty, I have not for a long time had the good fortune to see.

DAMAZY. (Pleased, jokingly) You are a judge of such things?

NOTARY. An able judge for many years, my dear sir, without boasting.

DAMAZY. They say she resembles me.

NOTARY. Really, as far as a young girl can have any resemblance to a grown man, Panna Helena looks like--eh--eh--eh--her dad--especially something about the nose.



DAMAZY. Yes, I always say that, too, bless my soul.

NOTARY. (After a moment) And he dotes on her, and cherishes her like a picture, and then--

DAMAZY. Well, what then?

NOTARY. Someone takes her for his own, and God knows what will happen.

DAMAZY. Well, you see! And then you say she is a comfort-- when there is only trouble--distress!

NOTARY. Hm! That's true, too--on my word! Oh! I am a father myself, my dear sir--I understand it all well.

DAMAZY. You also have a daughter? I congratulate you.

NOTARY. Only a son.

DAMAZY. That young fellow who arrived yesterday?

NOTARY. He's the one. How did he strike you?

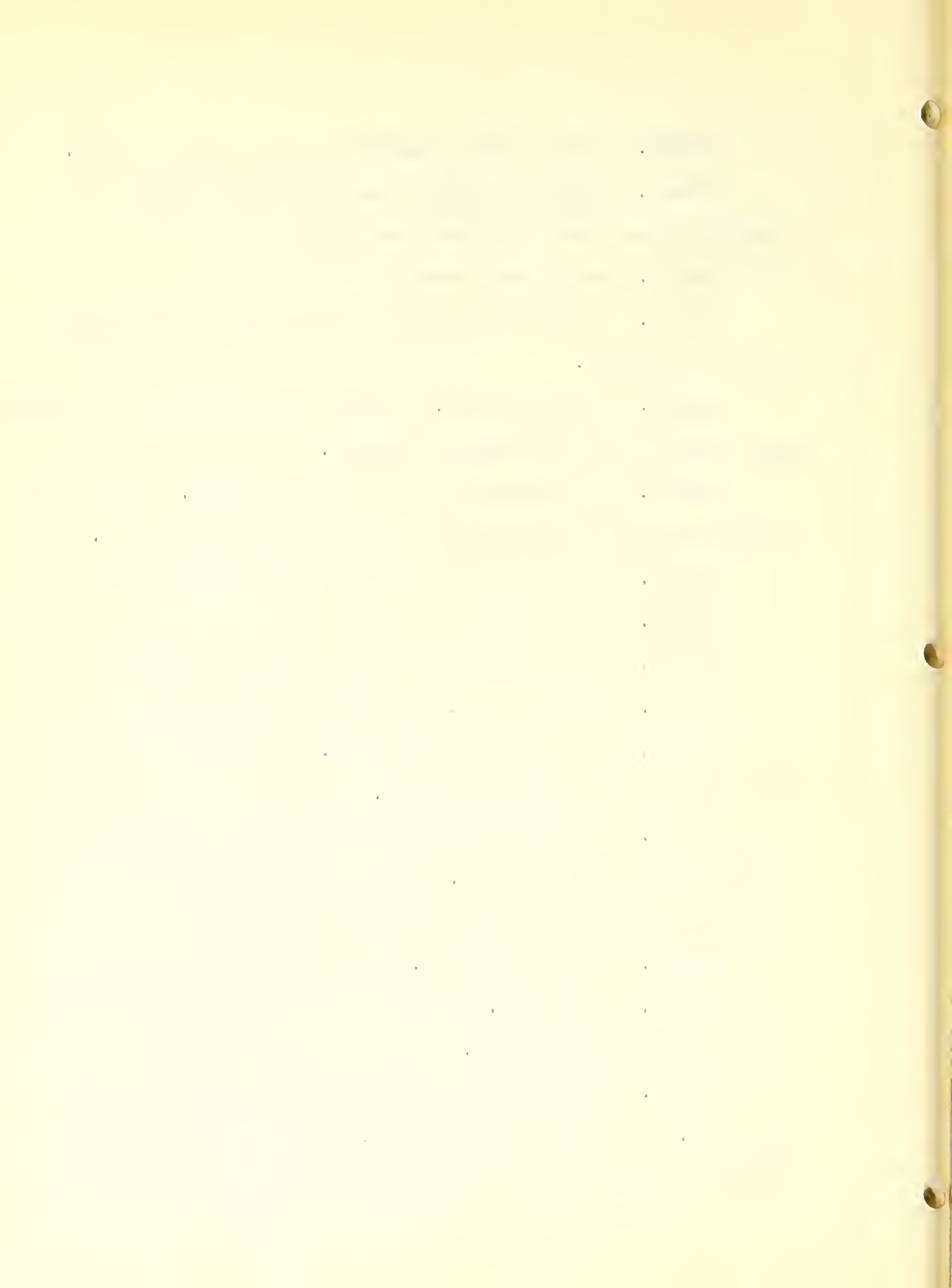
DAMAZY. All right--I can't say.--A lively fellow--and you know, I don't like them slow.

NOTARY. I took pains with his education, without boasting, even stinting my own table. He has a position with an insurance company, and on the side, he's an author.

DAMAZY. An author? Bah!--He writes for the papers?

NOTARY. That's it! Articles on political economy and the positivist philosophy.

DAMAZY. Well, well, that's very nice, such talent on his part. Indeed I suspected him. Yesterday, the way he began at supper, bless my soul, about participles and prepo-



sitions, I was quite at a loss; but it slipped out of his mouth, bless my soul, like water over a mill wheel.

NOTARY. He has already a fine income, for aside from his salary the newspaper pays him by the line.

DAMAZY. By the line, really! (After a moment of reflection) How's that, by the line?

NOTARY. For every line that he writes. (He makes a gesture, as if he were counting the money.)

DAMAZY. Well, well, how nice that is! (Aside) I should get a little.

NOTARY. In Warsaw they are forcing him upon a girl who has half a million dowry. (After a moment) What do you think of the proposition of your sister-in-law?

DAMAZY. I don't know of any proposition.

NOTARY. I am not surprised at your caution --but, sir, I know more than you think, by far.--Of course Pan Seweryn is to be your son-in-law.

DAMAZY. First I've heard of it.

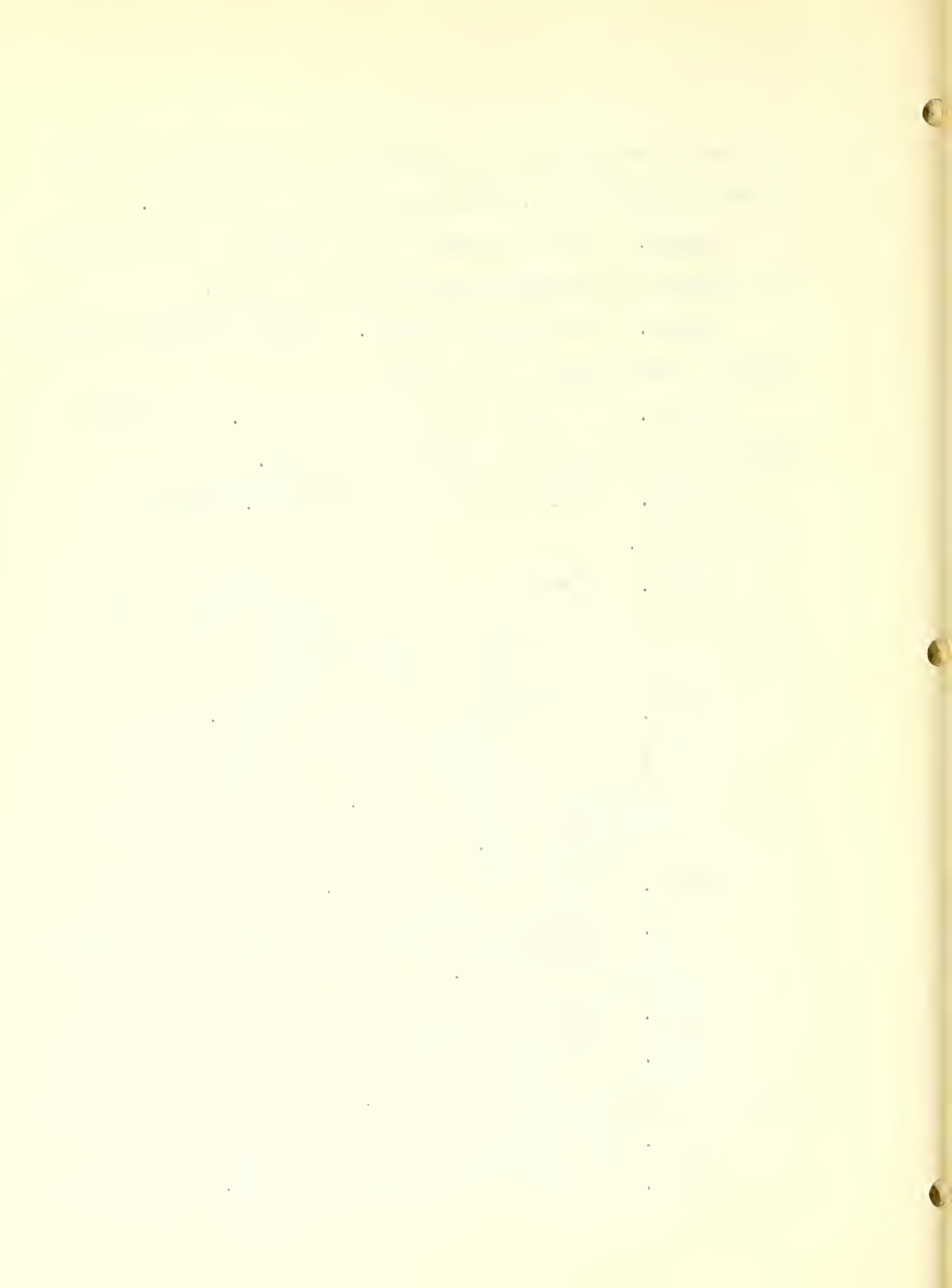
NOTARY. (Looks at him, goes to the door, then mysteriously) Give me your word of honor.

DAMAZY. (Amazed) And what about?

NOTARY. Give me your word of honor that you will not repeat to anybody what I tell you.

DAMAZY. Well, what is it?

NOTARY. But give me your word of honor. You will be



free to make use of this for your own benefit--it is a question only of this, that no one should know that the warning came from me.

DAMAZY. Warning?

NOTARY. My conscience bids me to proceed thus. Well, do you give me your word?

DAMAZY. If it is so important, I give it--but--

NOTARY. I desire no more. Without boasting, you will appreciate my procedure in this matter when you learn the facts. (After a moment, mysteriously in his ear, making a trumpet with both hands) Do you know about his relations with Manka, the ward of your sister-in-law?

DAMAZY. (Excitedly) What's that? What relations?

NOTARY. (Significantly) You can guess.

DAMAZY. (Violently) A love-affair, is it?

NOTARY. Foh! And a bad one at that!

DAMAZY. But you must be dreaming; it isn't possible!

NOTARY. I shouldn't say so if I didn't have proofs.

DAMAZY. How's that? Are there proofs!

NOTARY. Only moral ones, to be sure, but there are.

DAMAZY. But that would be the worst sort of baseness!

NOTARY. (In a lower voice) Vileness, sir!

DAMAZY. Right under the nose of two women who have nothing to busy themselves about. Then is that the way they have protected her!



NOTARY. (In his ear) My dear sir, they have winked at it. That's obvious.

DAMAZY. That calls for vengeance! Especially since she is our relative!

NOTARY. Relative? I didn't know that.

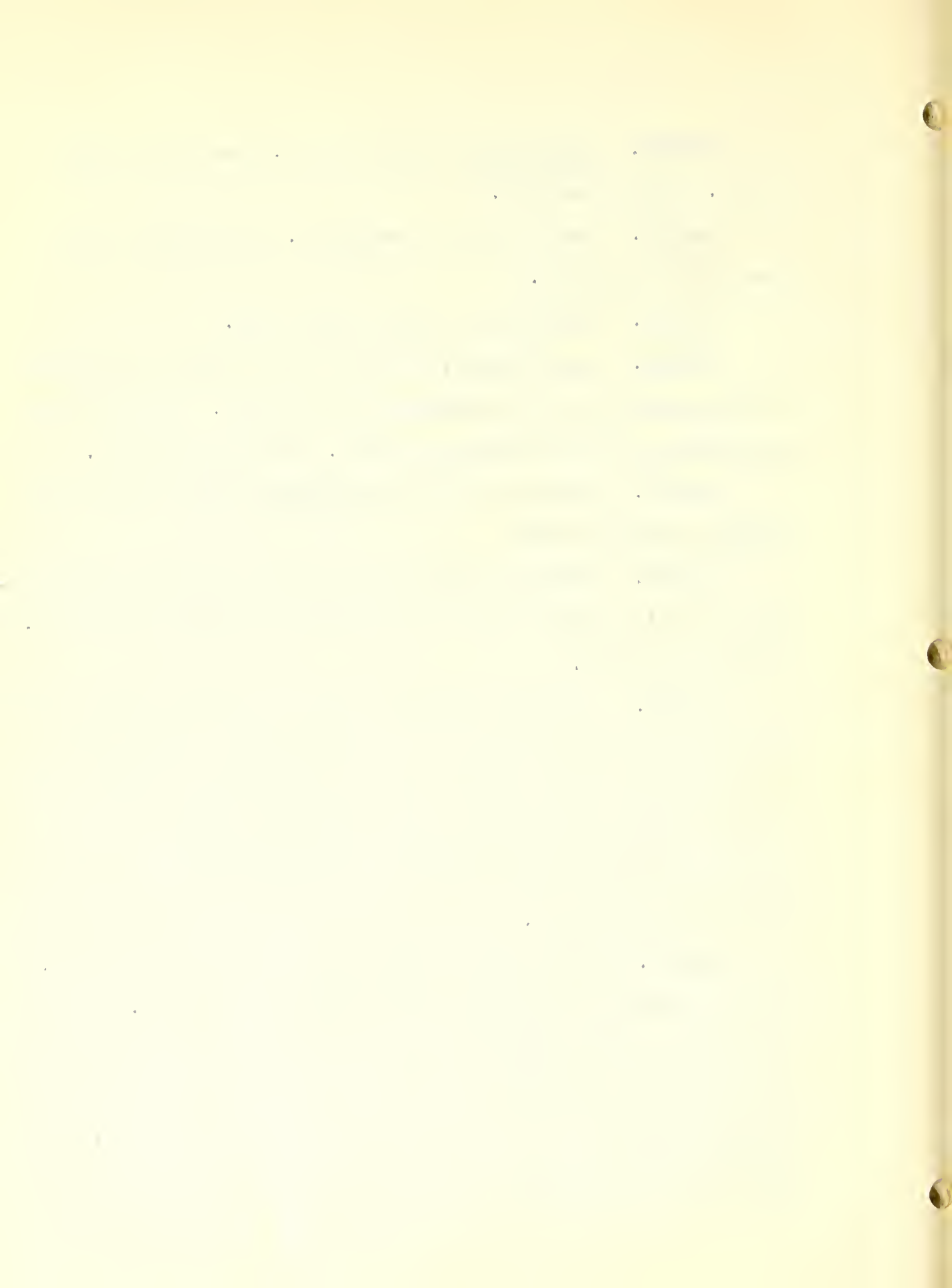
DAMAZY. The deceased, as her uncle, ought by no means to have left her to the kindness of his wife. He must have made some sort of provision for her. Show me his will.

NOTARY. His will? (As if to himself) Who even knows whether there is one?

DAMAZY. They're reputed to have made a mutual agreement.-- But it isn't likely that he would forget entirely that girl.-- Show me his will!

NOTARY. You have a perfect right to go into--eh--eh--eh-- the state of affairs; and in this connection I remind you-- that in case of any difficulties, complications, legal intricacies, (With outstretched hand, walking after him) I am at your service; that you will profit thereby, I can, without boasting, assure you.

DAMAZY. What's that to me?--My interests don't count! My only concern is whether he did something for her! And if he forgot, and if they are going to have that sort of guardianship over her, I will take the girl with me, so help me God! (Walking away) A fine state of things, bless my soul! (He goes out at the right.)



SCENE V

The NOTARY, alone, rubbing his hands, snapping his fingers, and making various gestures of satisfaction.

NOTARY. I succeeded, although he went a little farther than I had planned. I didn't think that he would inquire about the will for the sake of that girl.--He will find out a little too soon.--But it doesn't matter--I shall manage to become necessary to him, and persuade him that he can do nothing without my advice. (After a moment) He's playing a disinterested part now, but just let him smell something and he will change his color--I know men. (He sits down on the sofa.) Well, my dear notary, just act wisely now! Be a good diplomat and strategist!-- If only that scamp Genio doesn't spoil my plans. I haven't seen him sitting next to her even once--and today he has been on the go since morning.

SCENE VI

MANKA, with a watering pot, and GENIO, coming in at the ^{center} middle doors; the NOTARY, on the sofa.

GENIO. (Continuing the conversation) Parma Marya, at all events, you owe me an answer; when I hear it, I will no longer intrude.

MANNA. (Going to the flowers) But you are misinterpreting my words.--Do I call this intrusion.

GENIO. No?--Well, I thank you then. I regard this as half an answer to my question.

MANKA. You will not hear the rest.

GENIO. Why? You yourself do not understand what you experience; and on my part, it would be audacity to permit myself any inquiries when you are in such a state. I only put forward a general thesis, in the form of a psychological problem, which you must solve, although you may have to trouble your little head somewhat.

MANKA. You talk to me so strangely.

GENIO. In a language to which you are unaccustomed? So much the better; the treatment to which an organism is unaccustomed, works more efficiently.

MANKA. Do you wish to cure me?

GENIO. Exactly so.

MANKA. You have set yourself a difficult task.

GENIO. The greater value will a favorable result have for me.

MANKA. Then you think that you will succeed?

GENIO. I think I can count on it.

MANKA. And on what do you base that hope?

GENIO. On the everlasting axiom that truth sooner or later will triumph! (Taking her watering pot) Allow me, I will take your place. (He pours the water where she cannot reach) On the fact that, working frankly, I have an open face, on which you may read all my thoughts, for I do not put on a mask like those who use deceit as a weapon. (He mounts a



higher step.)

NOTARY. (Who for several moments has been watching them from the sofa with open mouth) He'll break his neck yet.

MANKA. This is all quite new to me--you are opening up a new world.

GENIO. (Jumping down) What may I expect for it?

MANKA. (Taking her watering pot) Gratitude, in any case.

GENIO. For the present I will be satisfied with that.

(MANKA goes out through the central doors; he bows to her respectfully.)

SCENE VII

GENIO, the NOTARY

NOTARY. (Rising, to GENIO) What's up?

GENIO. Aha!

NOTARY. What villainy is this, you scamp!

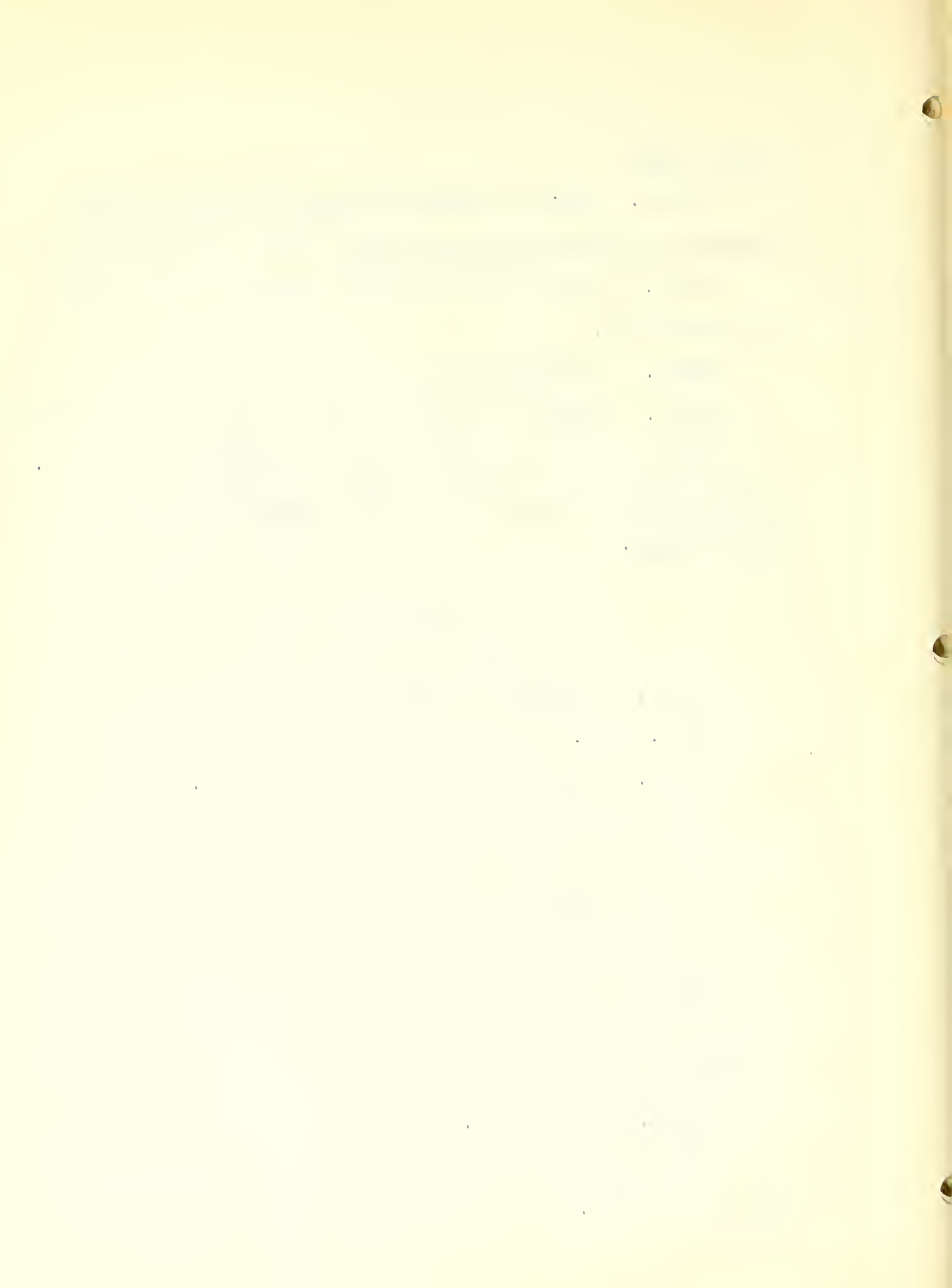
GENIO. Just be a little more parliamentary, I beg you, father!

NOTARY. You're playing the fool again, but I tell you you've chosen the wrong time.

GENIO. Seeing that our temperaments are probably just now about a hundred miles apart, and because we should not understand each other, I depart.

NOTARY. Please stay.

GENIO. What's up? (He takes a chair and sits on it hind side before.)



NOTARY. (Standing over him) Tell me first what you are--eh--eh--eh--for I cannot understand you. A positivist? and idealist? or what?

GENIO. Just now I am a physician.

NOTARY. A physician?

GENIO. (Poetically) A physician of a sad and sorely wounded soul; if my method succeeds, I shall seek in this soul a spirit kindred to my own.

NOTARY. Out of his head! Fh--eh--eh--clean out of his head! Don't get me impatient but listen to what I tell you. I ordered you to come here for your own benefit.

GENIO. I hurried here at your summons like an obedient son.

NOTARY. Then listen further.--There is in this house an heiress.

GENIO. After poetry, the meanest prose!

NOTARY. (Restraining his anger) I beg you, put your poetry in your pocket, and get ready for some prose, for I cannot speak otherwise. (After a moment) There is an heiress for whose hand I have prepared your way; and you, I don't know why, don't even look at her. (Scoffing) Do you lack courage because you consider that the value of her dowry is too high in comparison with your own value?

GENIO. Ha! ha! ha! I doubt whether you could find me a man whose conceit did not whisper good opinions of himself.



What? Should the value of the dowry decide the value of the lady and her superiority over me? Bah! That would be to put money on an altar of which it is unworthy.

NOTARY. Worthy or not worthy, what conclusion do you draw from what you have said?

GENIO. That I should consider every scruple of that sort an untimely prejudice.

NOTARY. The first wise word you have said; I see that you are a positivist.

GENIO. (With a smile) But, on the other hand, I hold the hunt for money exclusively, to be nonsense, which I leave to such unpractical people as the idealists.

NOTARY. (Desperately) Will you never take off your fool's cap?

GENIO. (In a good-humored tone) As an adherent of the positivist method, you should know, father, that first of all, it seeks facts--and we must admit as a fact that there is in man a heart, which is a veritable treasury of moral delights, and that if we deaden its beating, we consciously condemn ourselves to a series of deviations from our true faith, which may lead us astray.--

NOTARY. Eh--he's gone crazy!

GENIO. (As before) Speculation on the hand of a woman in the anticipation of pecuniary benefit, is a proof of impotence, to which a man is brought who carries his head



in the clouds. I regard the heart and love as a precious capital, which used in the company of a chosen companion brings in high interest such as no Jew would dare dream of.

NOTARY. Listen, are you making fun of me?

GENIO. (Rising) I told you that if we do not understand each other, I can leave!

NOTARY. Wait, you unhappy boy, let us talk like men, not like half-wits!--Doesn't that squire's daughter please you?

GENIO. Yes indeed, she's a nice little girl, and if we were both free, who knows--?

NOTARY. How's that, both free? What do you mean, she is free, and you, I hope--

GENIO. I beg your pardon, father--she has a fiancé.

NOTARY. She hasn't, that's been broken.

GENIO. What? Broken with Antoni! I don't believe that.

NOTARY. With what Antoni?

GENIO. With the brother of the fellow whom they wish to force on her for the sake of some family prospects.

NOTARY. So that dull-wit is making after her? That's nothing!

GENIO. He confided in me as a school-fellow. What, speaking as a positivist, since you so plainly like the word, father, could he call my procedure, if knowing about this, I stepped in his way?

NOTARY. Never leave an ox word! But I tell you that



nothing will ever come of it!

GENIO. That's not my affair. And furthermore, that girl whom you saw here a moment ago, father, is the one for me.

NOTARY. What? That wail, that girl of loose morals who is trifling with Seweryn?

GENIO. (Severely) Please, father, there's a limit to everything, even jokes.

NOTARY. And I have lived to see such a comfort! But you unhappy boy, you've been taken in!

GENIO. I know all about it from Antoni. His brother tried to take advantage of her position here, and now with unworthy intentions he has deserted her without regard to the condition of her heart.

NOTARY. That's so, for she is blindly infatuated with him. (Scoffingly) And you, notwithstanding, want to entice her away from him, and in such a hurry?--I don't know whether that is stupidity or conceit!

GENIO. (Touched) I have mentioned that I am appearing only in the rôle of physician. If I tried to assume another just now, I should be an absolute idiot, and positivism teaches that that is the worst qualification for attaining any end whatever.

NOTARY. Go to the devil with your positivism! (He



paces up and down. After a moment) Well, then all in all I am ruined, struck down by my own son!

GENIO. We'll talk when you are in a state to listen more coolly, father.

NOTARY. I'll curse you!

GENIO. After more careful consideration, you won't do that, father.

NOTARY. I will!

GENIO. At all events, reflection will not hurt you. (He goes out at the center.)

SCENE VIII

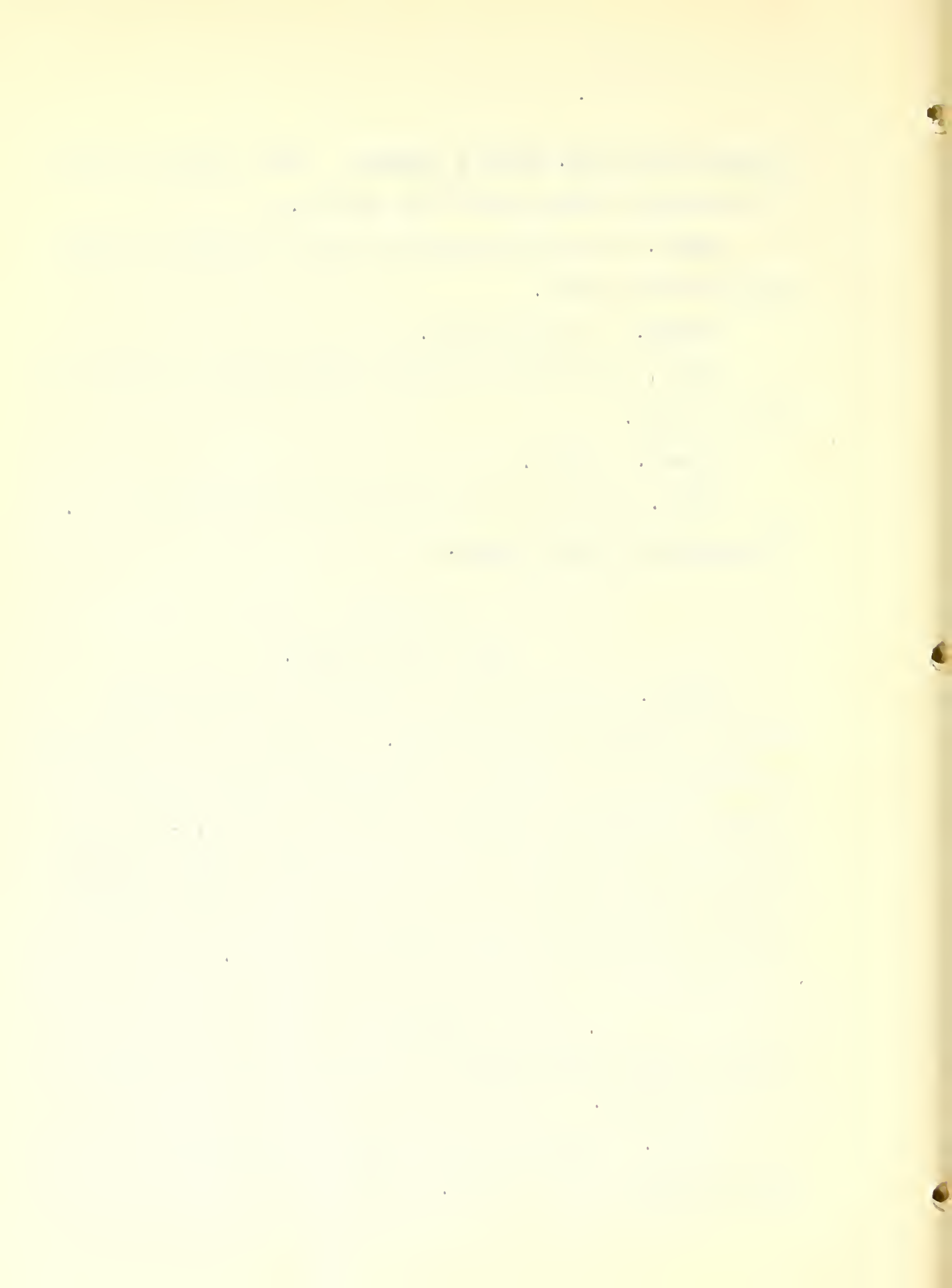
The NOTARY, alone.

NOTARY. So these are the results of a conceited booby's getting his head turned. I warrant that in his own conviction he is a giant of uprightness and virtue--and his father, naturally, is making a fool of himself.--Why? Because he wants his child to be fortunate. (After a moment) A great crime, which out of a hundred couples who unite, at least some ninety commit without scruples!

SCENE IX

HELENA, the NOTARY, later TYKALSKA, later ANTONI, later
PAN DAMAZY.

HELENA. (With her hat and wrap on her arm, running in from the left) Pan Antoni! Where is Pan Antoni? (To the



NOTARY) Haven't you seen Pan Antoni, sir?

NOTARY. Is this a madhouse, or what? (He looks surprised.)

HELENA. I must see him! (She runs out by the middle doors, for a moment.)

NOTARY. What does she want with him? Looks as if Genio was right.

TYKALSKA. (Coming in hastily, also from the left, and pinning her stocking to her waist.) Helena dear! (To the NOTARY) Why are you standing still, as if you were a post? Go after her! Something has happened here.

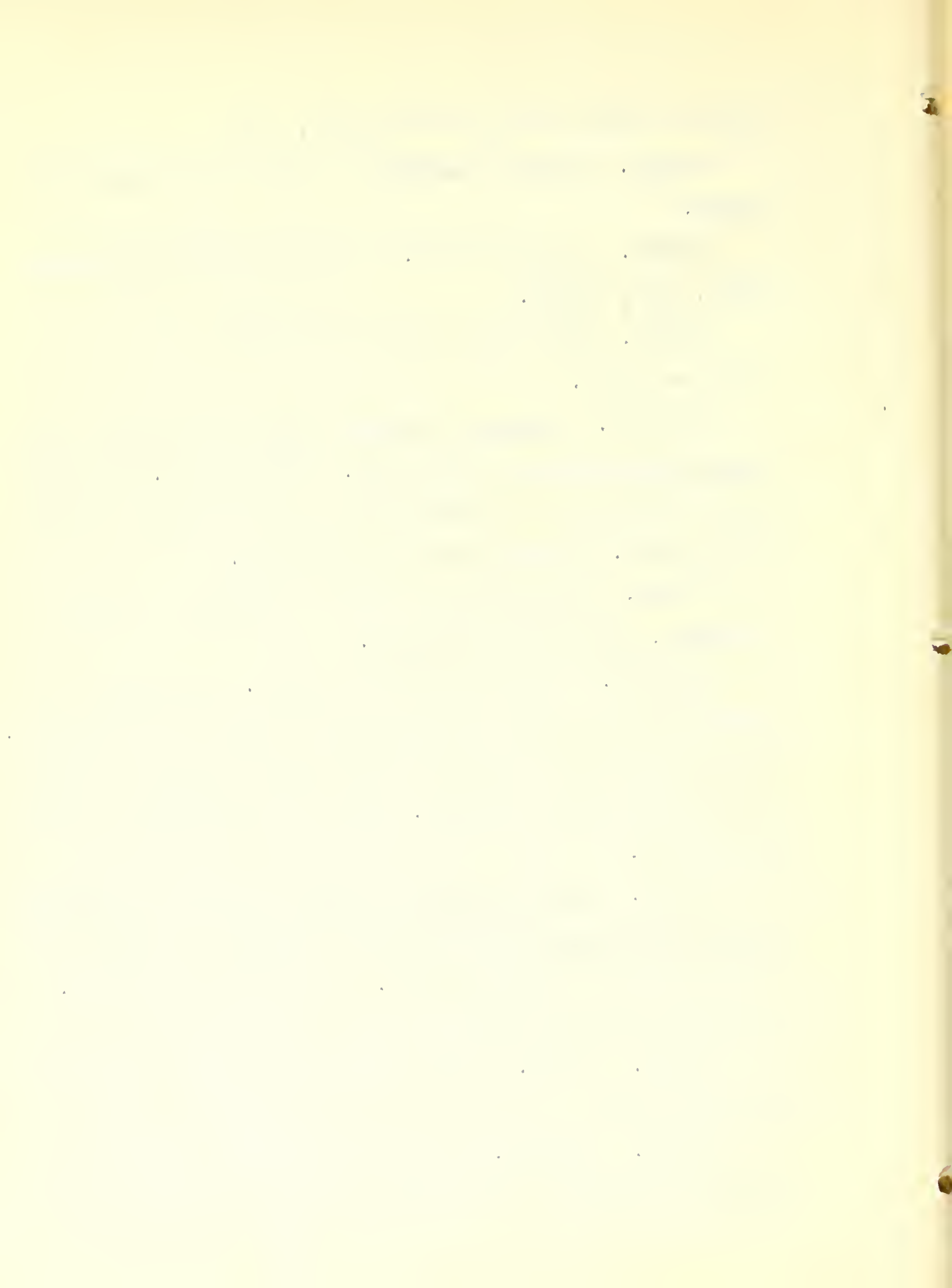
NOTARY. (Impatiently) What has happened? (HELENA, returning, runs out on the right.)

TYKALSKA. I don't know, on my honor. Pan Damazy has locked himself up with sister and they seem to be quarreling. Helena ran out as if she had been scalded and she's looking for Antoni--I don't know why. We must keep an eye on them, my dear sir.

HELENA. (From the right, leading in ANTONI, and taking from him the book which he has been reading) Put down that book, and run to order the team. (She puts on her cloak.) You have your own horses here, haven't you?

ANTONI. I have. What's this; who's fainted? Send for the doctor?

HELENA. The idea! Order the team as quickly as possible!--Daddy is very cross.



ANTONI. At whom? What about?

HELENA. You must take us, for we have no horses here.
(Impatiently) You must know that we came in auntie's carriage.--

ANTONI. All right! Only where do you want to go? Home?

HELENA. Home, to our own house.--We'll go together; I'll be more at ease with you.

TYKALSKA. But Helena dear, stop a bit. (To the NOTARY) My dear sir, go see what has caused all this.

NOTARY. Oh, please let me alone! Who's telling me to pinch my fingers in the door?

HELENA. My dearest Pan Antoni, you're the only man I have faith in! (In a low tone) I've told daddy; everything will be all right. Just you order the horses brought right away; then we'll take daddy away from there.

ANTONI. From where?

HELENA. From auntie. He's reproaching her about something or other--about some will. Auntie started to faint, but she came to.

ANTONI. (With a smile) Well, that's nothing terrible.

HELENA. How horrid you are! You're laughing, and I'm trembling all over.

ANTONI. Just be calm; we'll go right away, seeing that you want to. (In a lower tone) I shall carry my treasure away.

HELENA. What treasure? Oh! All right, all right; only hurry up, my dearest boy!--I'll be so grateful to you.

ANTONI. (In a low tone) And your father;

HELENA. He has already consented to everything. (Pushing him) Hurry up! Hurry up!--(ANTONI goes out by the center door. To TYKALSKA) Dear lady, I have left several things in your room. (The raised voices of ZEGOCINA and DAMAZY are heard.)

DAMAZY. (Behind the scenes) Meanwhile please order horses for me.

HELENA. Oh, for heaven's sake! They're coming here, and they are quarreling so!

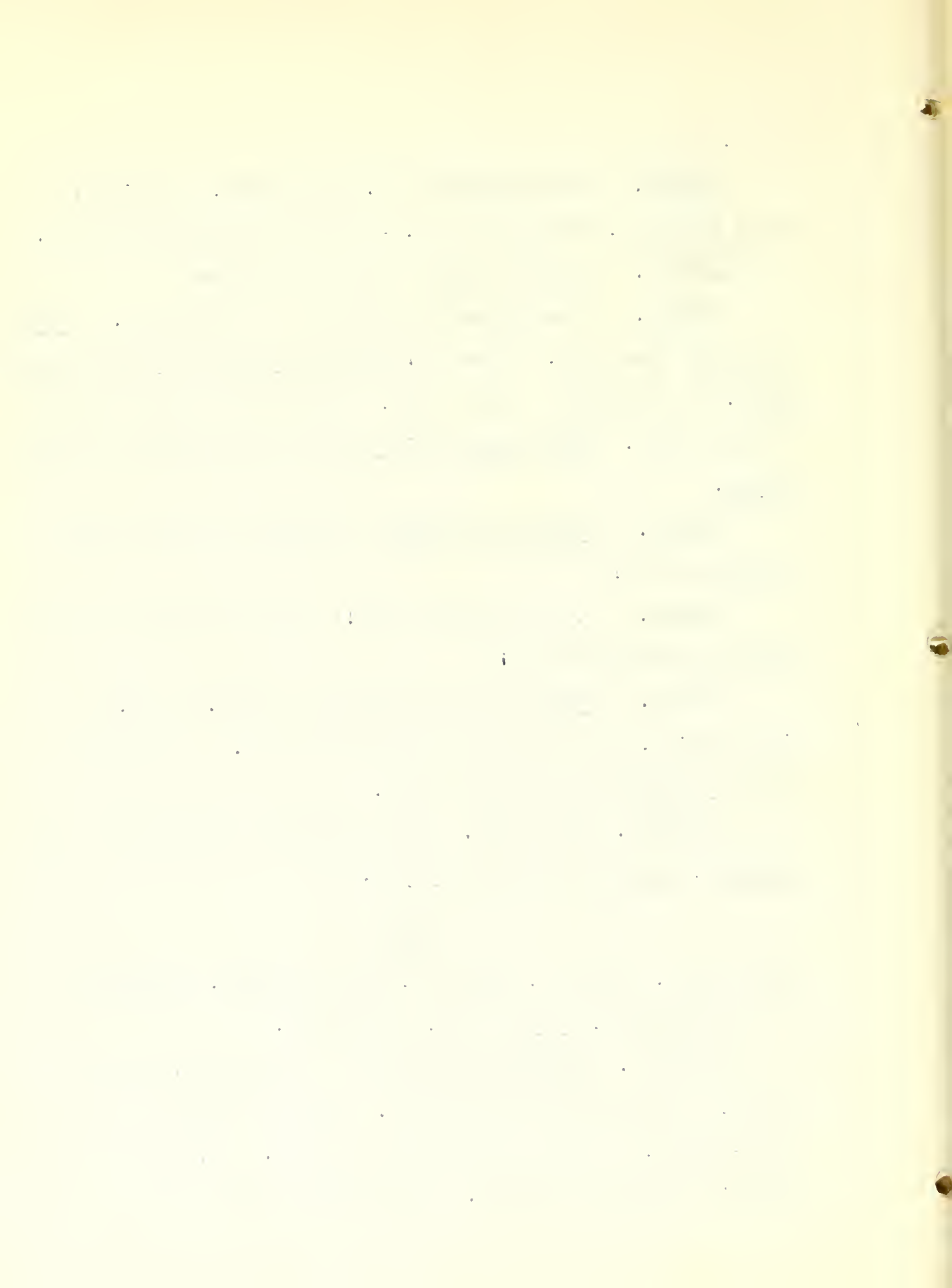
DAMAZY. (Coming in at the left) Helena! Come!-- We're going!--We've nothing more to do here. (He goes out with her through the center door.)

TYKALSKA. Good Lord! (She starts to follow them, but returns, when she sees her sister.)

SCENE X

The NOTARY; TYKALSKA; ZEGOCINA, from the left, supported by SEWERYN; later MANKA; then GENIO.

ZEGOCINA. (Melodramatically) In my house, in my own house, to hear such impertinence! After so many years of self-denial, to live to see such a reward! Oh, but they haven't driven me out yet! (To SEWERYN) Where are my



smelling salts?--

SEWERYN. Manka will bring them right away.

ZEGOCINA Manka!

MANKA. (Coming in at the left) Here they are.

ZEGOCINA. (Infuriated, in a trembling voice) Begone!
Out of my house!

TYKALSKA. (Wringing her hands) Sister! (To SEWERYN)
Seweryn, protect her!

SEWERYN. (Aside) That'd be a fine idea!

ZEGOCINA. (As before) I have fostered a viper, a
viper! Now there is no more honesty! You can rely on noth-
ing! Get out!

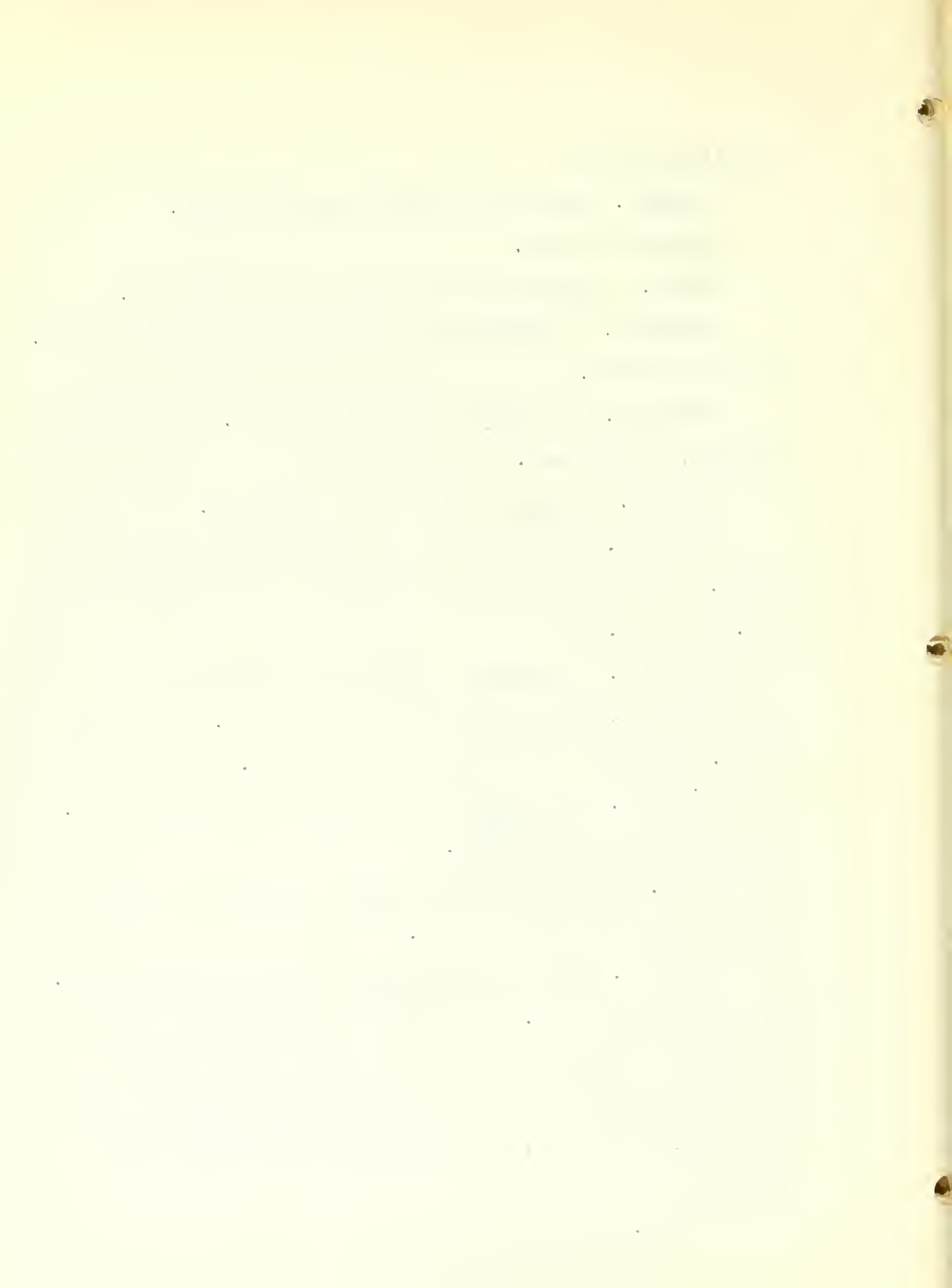
TYKALSKA. (Weeping) But where will she go?

ZEGOCINA. And you're still annoying me! It's your
fault. You should have kept watch of them.

TYKALSKA. (To Manka) Come, come out of her sight!
(She takes her in her arms.)

MANKA. (In a trembling voice) But first I should like
to know what you accuse me of.

ZEGOCINA. (In a burning fury) What I accuse you of!
You abominable flirt!--And what about those relations of
yours that they reproach me with now, throwing them in my
face; those relations that have got in the way of my most
honorable intentions, and disturbed the harmony of the
family?



MANKA. (As before) Ask that of this gentleman who is silent as a schoolboy afraid of punishment.

SEWERYN. (Walking past her, in a low tone) Manka!-- Are you mad! You'll not accomplish anything this way.

MANKA. (Contemptuously) You--scoundrel!

SEWERYN. (Aside) Charming scenes!

ZEGOCINA. (At the height of her passion) What audacity! Be quiet, you kitchen wench; he is your master, you understand! If you forgot that, it's no wonder that your head was turned. (MANKA bursts into tears, hiding her face in her hands.)

TYKALSKA. (Rushes to ZEGOCINA) Sister, for the love of heaven! (ZEGOCINA bursts into spasmodic sobbing.)

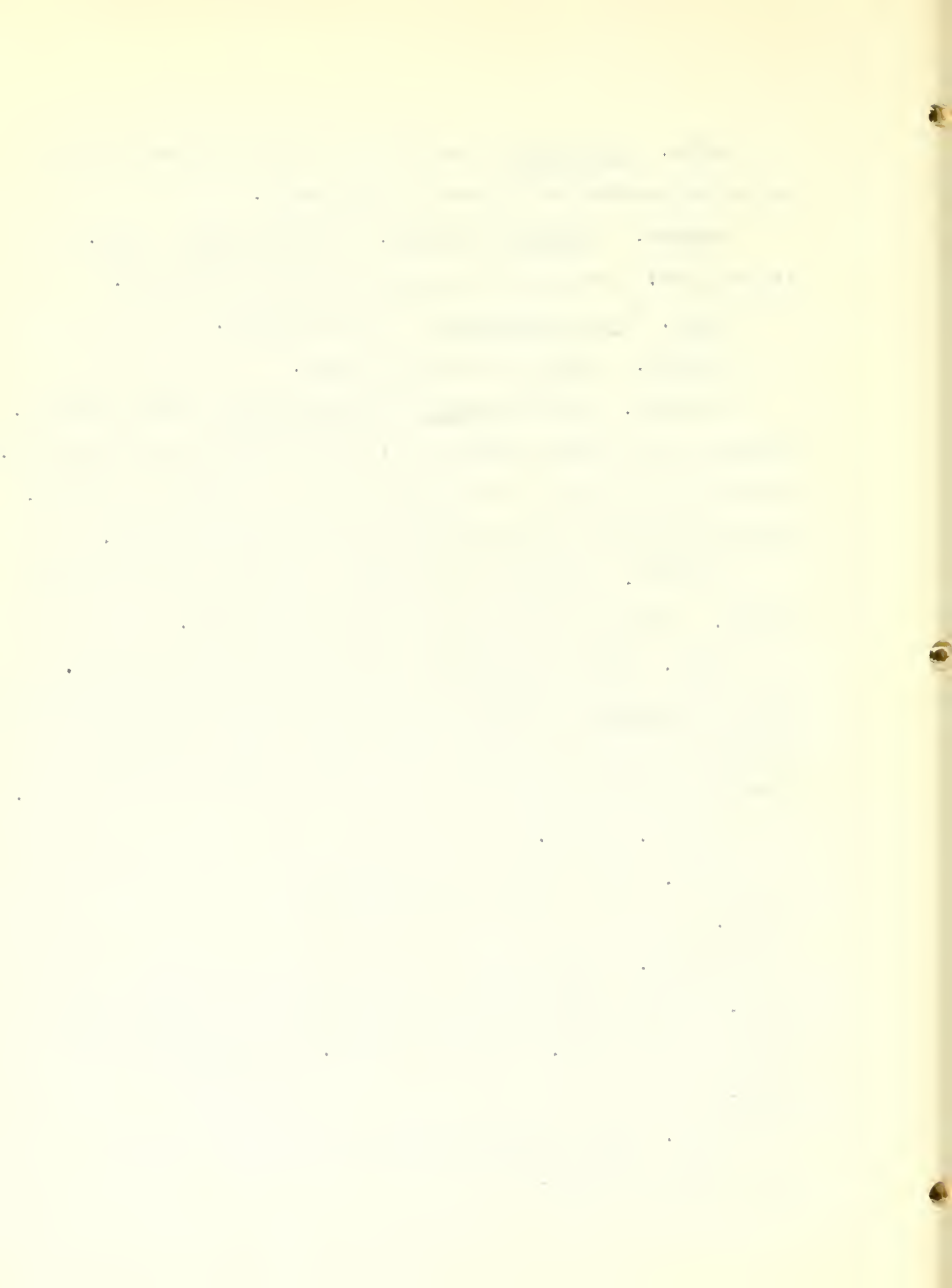
GENIO. (Who has entered a moment ago from the right, with the greatest contempt, to SEWERYN, who is making a stealthy attempt to reach the exit) What's this, sir? A retreat? Perhaps it is convenient, but it is not necessarily honorable.

SEWERYN. What?!

GENIO. (In a voice low but emphatic) You miserable wretch!

SEWERYN. (Confused) You will answer to me for those words. (GENIO answers with a laugh full of contempt--aside) But I got into this! Serves me right! (He goes out at the right.)

MANKA. (In a choking voice, to ZEGOCINA) Please have pity on me, mistress!



ZEGOCINA. (Leaping at her with clenched fists) Get out! Get out!--

GENIO. (Stepping between them and protecting MANKA from ZEGOCINA with his elbow; with the greatest indignation) With your permission, too much excitement may do you harm.--
(To MANKA, offering her his arm) May I?

NOTARY. (Aside) What is that donkey butting in for? Such chivalry!

ZEGOCINA. (After a moment of stupefaction) What's this? What does this man want?

GENIO. This man is doing you a favor--nothing more.
(To MANKA) I am at your service. (He leads her to the rear.)

TYKALSKA. Come here! Come here! Mary mother, what has happened! (She follows them, sheltering MANKA with her arms.
They go out by the central ^{or} door.)

SCENE XI

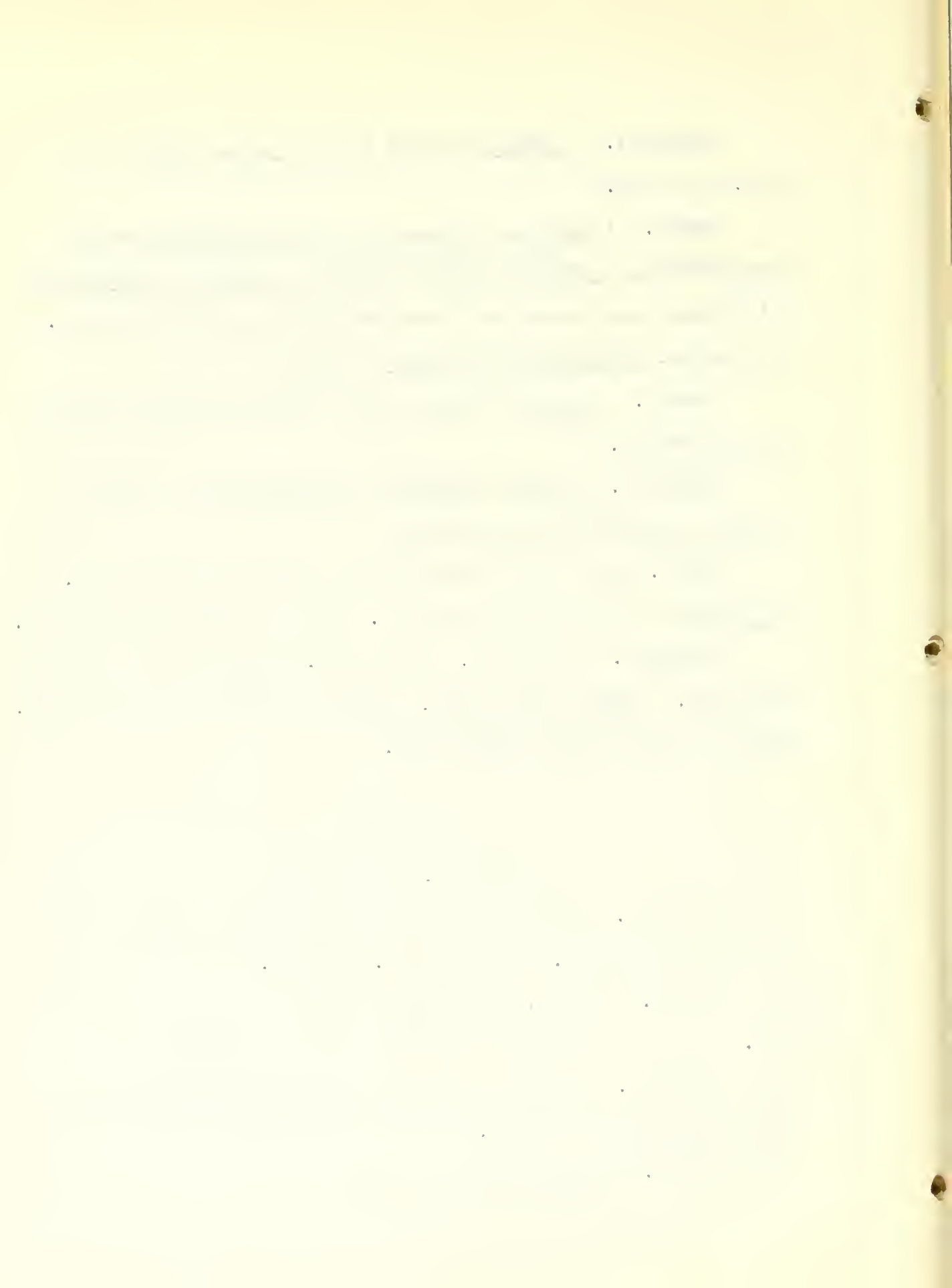
ZEGOCINA, the NOTARY

ZEGOCINA. (Pacing up and down with quick steps) What was all this about! What was it! Notary!

NOTARY. (Aside, ironically) She doesn't know what it was!

ZEGOCINA. (More vigorously, stepping before him with arms outspread) Notary!

NOTARY. (Drawing back) First of all, I advise you to



be calm. (Aside) How charming she is now!

ZEGOCINA. Be calm! I have to be calm when everything is lost!--Some evil spirit opened the eyes of that brute.-- He demanded the will, he threatened me with the courts--with sealing up my property! That's the way he thanks me for what I wanted to do for him!

NOTARY. Dear lady, to believe in human sensibility, is to conspire against yourself.

ZEGOCINA. Wretches! Wretches!

NOTARY. You cannot count on your own flesh and blood!

ZEGOCINA. I am lost, stripped of everything! (She falls into his arms and trembles spasmodically.)

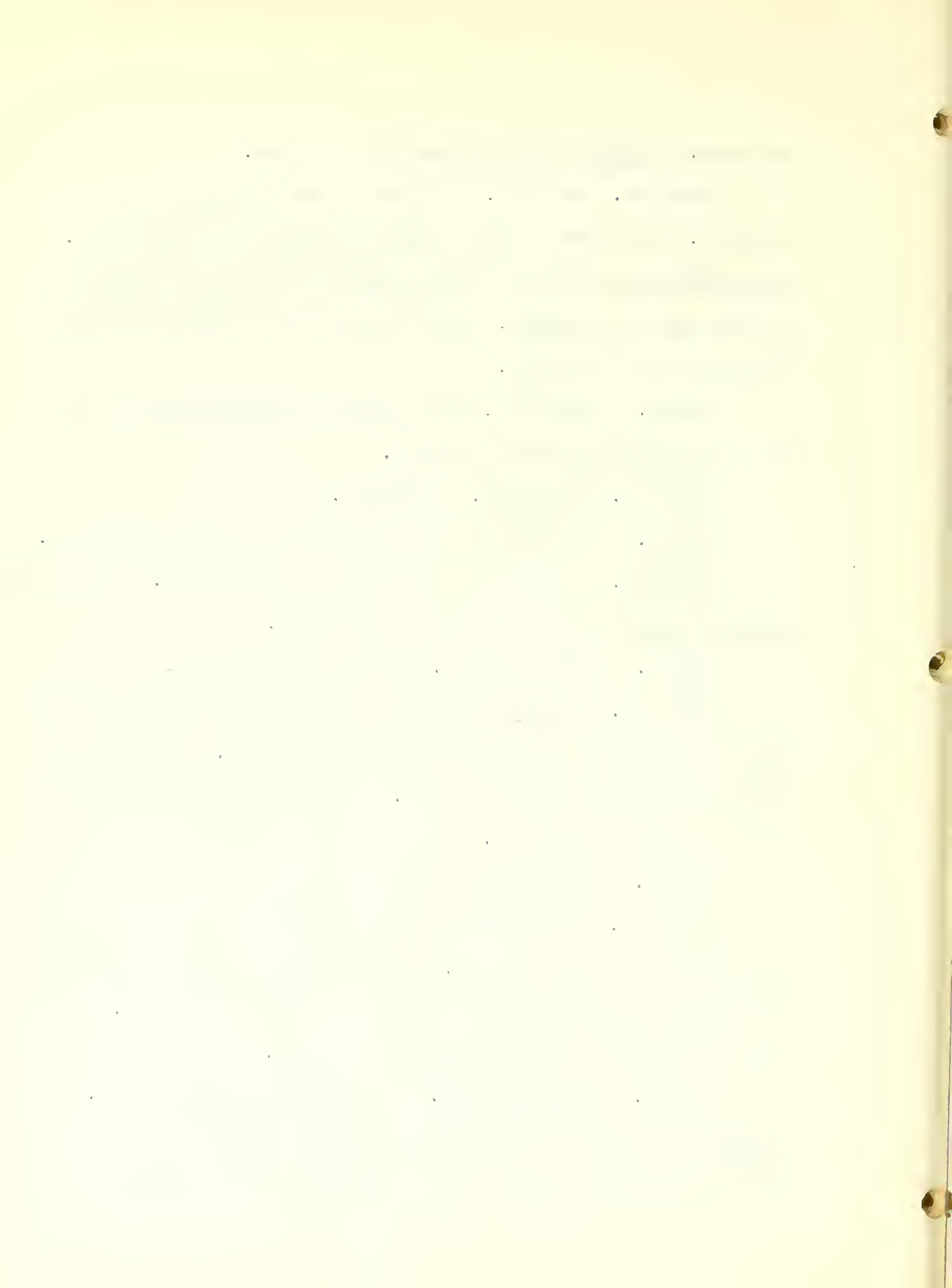
NOTARY. (Aside) Musk!--It gets up my nose.

ZEGOCINA. (After a moment, gradually freeing herself from his embrace, aside) Ah, what a thought! (Pondering) That is the only means of help. (With feeling) Notary, now all my hopes are in you.

NOTARY. (Restlessly) But what can I--?

ZEGOCINA. With such a knowledge of law--with your brains, you will be a match for it.--Of course, it will be necessary to dispute the most proper claims, to plead in court.--Oh, you will preserve the property from ruin.

NOTARY. (Aside) ^{Ye-e-es!} ~~Yeah!~~ All for your pretty eyes!
(Aloud) I should do willingly--eh--eh--eh--what I could--but, dear lady, a man with so many affairs--eh--eh--eh--and



duties--

ZEGOCINA. Sit down. (They sit down on the sofa) After all, this is for our common good.

NOTARY. (Puzzled) What do you mean by common?

ZEGOCINA. (Wringing her hands) Would you retreat?-- And abandon me at this moment?

NOTARY. (Not knowing what to say) Dear lady--eh--eh--

ZEGOCINA. (Suddenly) Or perhaps I misunderstood even you. (After a moment, lowering her eyes) You remember, when you came here, you made me a proposition!

NOTARY. A proposition?

ZEGOCINA. (As before) I did not answer, for what woman could decide in a single moment?--

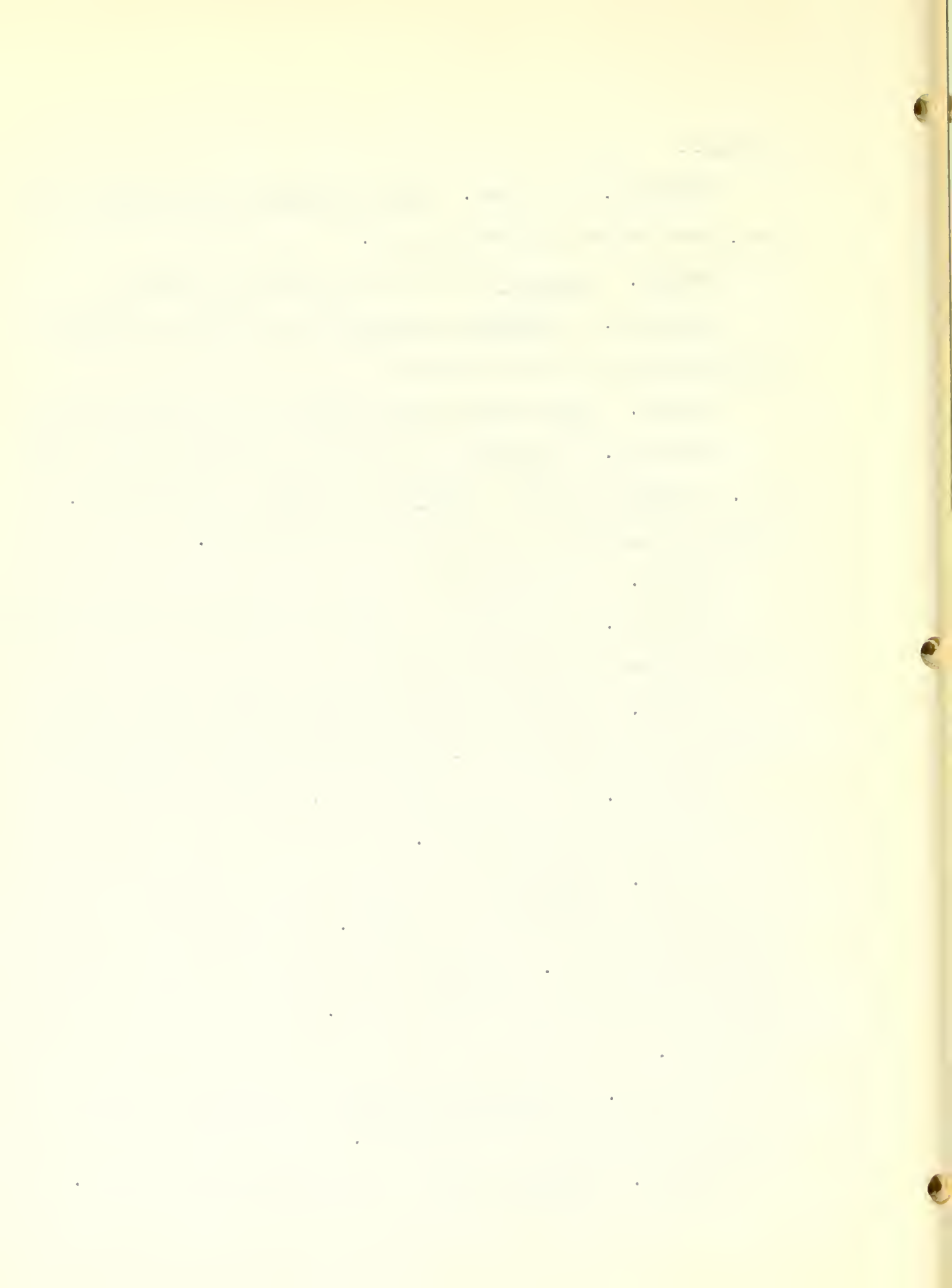
NOTARY. (Suddenly comprehending, aside) Well, well, well--come to think of it, that might be the best combination.

ZEGOCINA. You say nothing? Ah, do not force me to blush at those recollections!

NOTARY. (Eagerly) Dear lady, I have always been your worshiper--eh--eh--eh--and servant. Your words will be sacred commandments to me. (Aside) I shall never forgive myself for opening the eyes of that squire.--Now it will be more difficult.

ZEGOCINA. (Lowering her eyes) You asked me whether I was not thinking of a new union.

NOTARY. (Drawing near) You answered me evasively.



ZEGOCINA. (Modestly) Put yourself in my position.
How was I to act?

NOTARY. And I hardly recovered from it. Why, I went
around in a daze. (He takes her hand and kisses it.)

ZEGOCINA. Today, after profound consideration--

NOTARY. (Patting her hand) He! he! he!

ZEGOCINA. (Tragically) Especially after that scene,
which has convinced me that a woman without the protection
of a man is--

NOTARY. (As before) An anomaly--eh--eh--eh.

ZEGOCINA. (Laying her head on his breast) Notary,
work for yourself--I confide to you--

NOTARY. (Aside, opening his mouth and wrinkling his
nose to keep from sneezing) Musk!

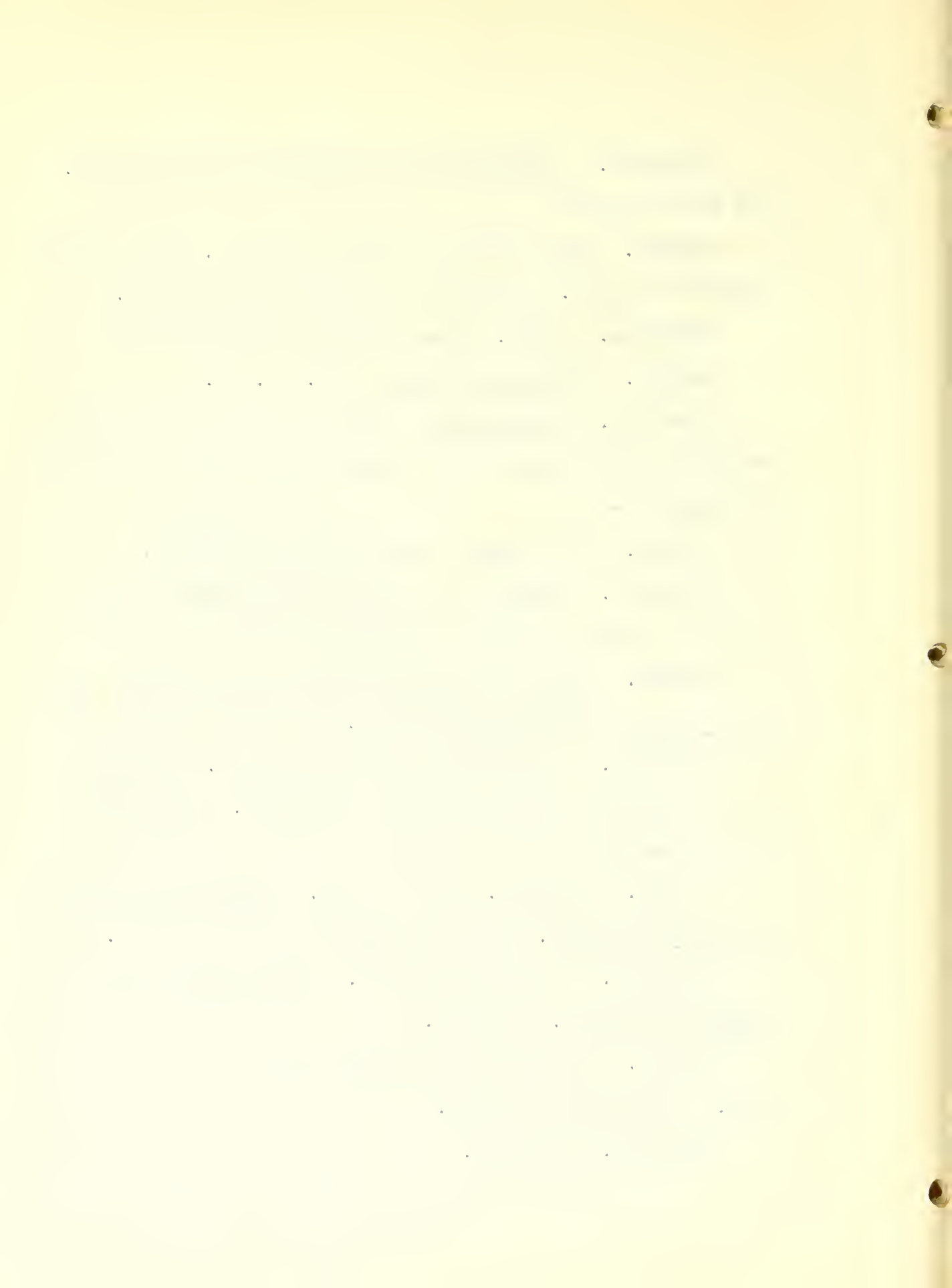
ZEGOCINA. Myself, and all my interests. (Aside)
How he smells of snuff--it makes me sneeze! (Aloud) Do
you use snuff?

NOTARY. Somewhat.--For my eyes. (Again, as above,
he makes an effort. After a moment) So it's agreed.

ZEGOCINA. I beg your pardon! (She sneezes after
fruitless efforts.) Agreed!

NOTARY. (Sneezing powerfully) And the contract is
made. (He kisses her hand.)

ZEGOCINA. To death!



ACT IV

The same room as in the preceding act.

SCENE I

MANKA and HELENA, dressed for the journey, are seated in the rear. ANTONI, also dressed for the journey, with his hat in his hand, is pacing up and down the room.

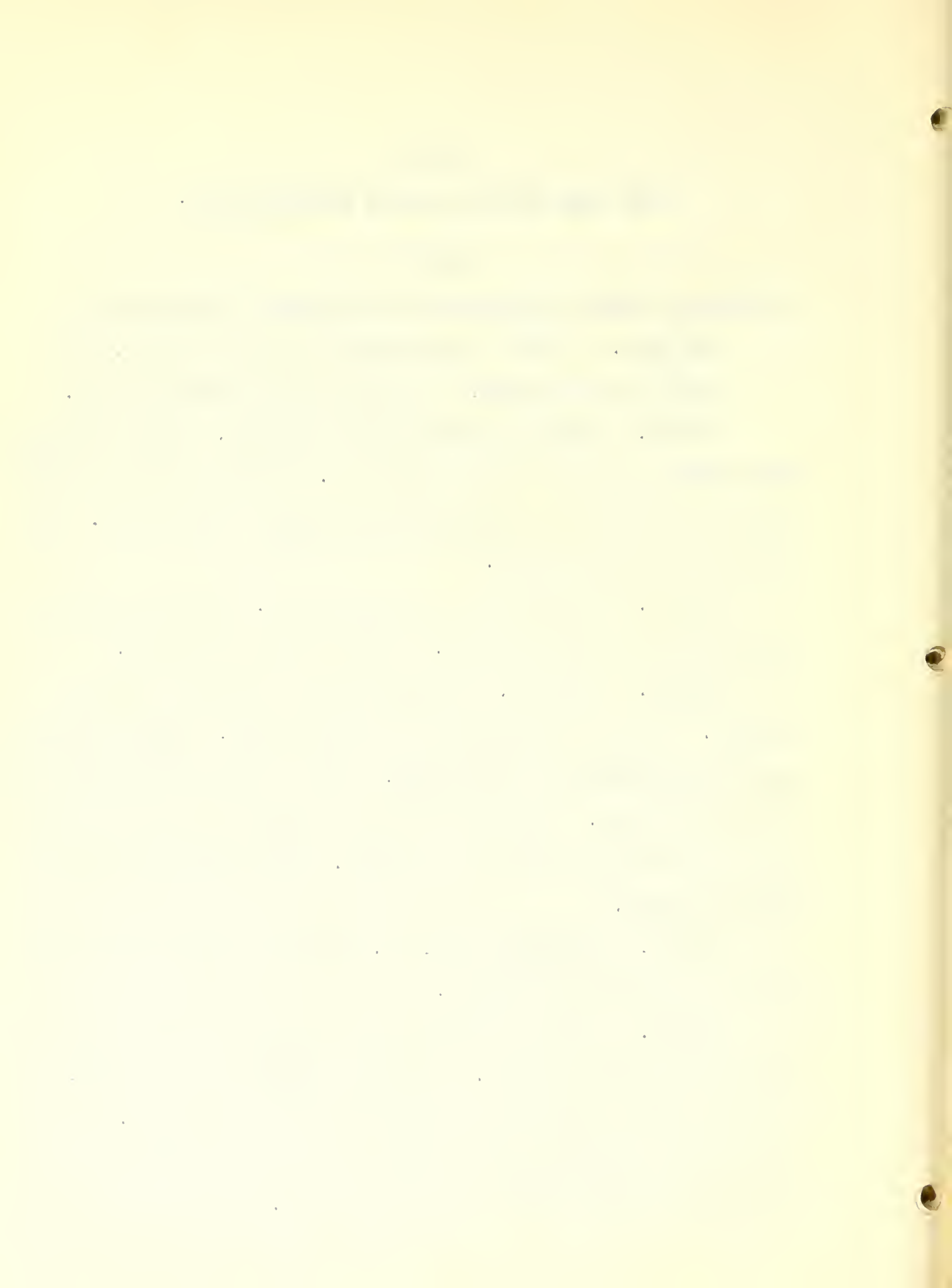
HELENA. (Sits for some time in silence. After a moment)
What daddy's up to, I can't make out. He shouted for horses, he said to get ready (imitating his tone) lickety-cut! And now he is sitting there.

ANTONI. The notary is detaining him. They are having some sort of a consultation. Have a little patience!

HELENA. Patience! I don't want to be here a minute longer. It is so oppressive, so suffocating. (She rises and goes to the window at the right.) The horses have stood there for an hour now. Matthew has fallen asleep in the coachman's box, and daddy's nowhere to be seen. (She taps impatiently with her foot.)

ANTONI. (Jokingly) Oh, oh! Panna Helena doesn't know how to control her feelings.

HELENA. Don't make fun of me, please; you see that I am standing on hot coals. Oh, how I dislike such scenes!-- I should like to have hidden away somewhere or other.--Daddy is always so excitable--it seems to me that I shan't be able to breathe again until I am home at last.



ANTONI. But I should like this journey to last forever.

HELENA. Then you are pleased that we are going too?--
Really now! I thought that it was all one to you and that
you were giving us your horses quite unwillingly.

ANTONI. Did you read that in my eyes? I thought that
women were more sharp-sighted than that.

HELENA. Then why aren't you just as impatient as I am?

ANTONI. Because I am happy at this very moment--with
the mere hope of having in my own carriage, under my protec-
tion, somebody whom I love, worship, adore.

HELENA. Hush! What's this again? (She shrugs her
shoulders, glancing at MANKA.)

ANTONI. Indeed, the longer your father hangs around,
the better. You are impatient, you're peevish--but I just
gaze at you.

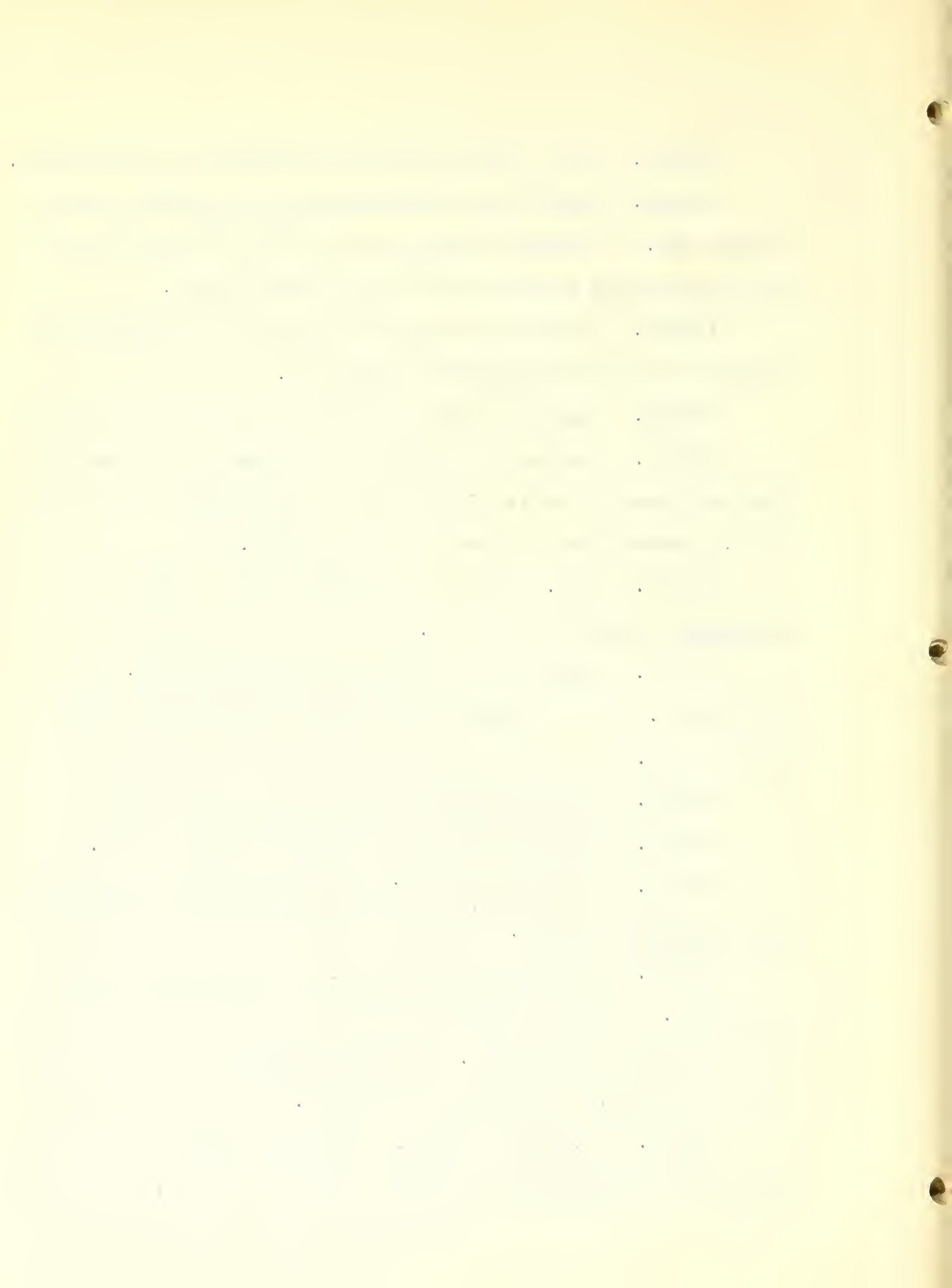
HELENA. (At the window) Why do you gaze at me?

ANTONI. Because you are so pretty in such a mood.

HELENA. (With a little pout, throwing him a glance over
her shoulder) Really!

ANTONI. And looking at you so, I forget everything
around me. I don't even know where we are--it is enough
for me that I am with you. (After a moment) But no earlier
than yesterday, I was ready to despair.

HELENA. Oh, oh --despair! *Really, the general impression is that*
One might think that really
aren't
you gentlemen ~~were not~~ so easily inclined to that. Oh, these



men--nasty, horrid egotists! Why didn't the Lord create only women!

ANTONI. Well, I say, what a wholesale curse on us all!

HELENA. Well, not on all, but--(To herself, leaving the window) I might have given him his brother for an example, but I don't want to hurt his feelings. (She sits down again by MANKA, and they whisper together.)

SCENE II

The same. GENIO, hat in hand, comes in on his tiptoes, bows to the ladies, then goes to ANTONI, who, seated at the left and gazing continually at HELENA, takes out his tobacco pouch and rolls a cigarette.)

ANTONI. Why are you stealing about in this fashion?

GENIO. (Sitting down beside him) I don't know myself.-- I walk on tiptoe and I talk in a whisper, as if I had something on my conscience. The atmosphere of this house is reacting on me.

ANTONI. Is it only the atmosphere?

GENIO. Something queer has happened to me.

ANTONI. Sad eyes! Oh, those eyes!

GENIO. (With a sigh) What a miraculous power--

ANTONI. (Jokingly continuing his words) --there is in *such* an apparently feeble organ of perception as the eye!

GENIO. Oh, of course!



ANTONI. Then I see, that you're really--?

GENIO. (Looking at MANKA) People define love differently: the nearest to the truth are probably those who call it a disease, into which one falls unwittingly.

ANTONI. (As before) And whose cure is sweet!

GENIO. Oh, of course!

ANTONI. (After a moment) Are you leaving, too?

GENIO. What should I do here?

ANTONI. But are^{n't} you coming to see me, all the same?

GENIO. But shan't I intrude?

ANTONI. (Laughing) How, with an old classmate?

GENIO. I wasn't thinking of that, you know perfectly well--but she is going with you, and is to stay there.

ANTONI. That's so.

GENIO. But you probably live very near.

ANTONI. Neighbors.

GENIO. (Kissing him) Will you do me a favor?

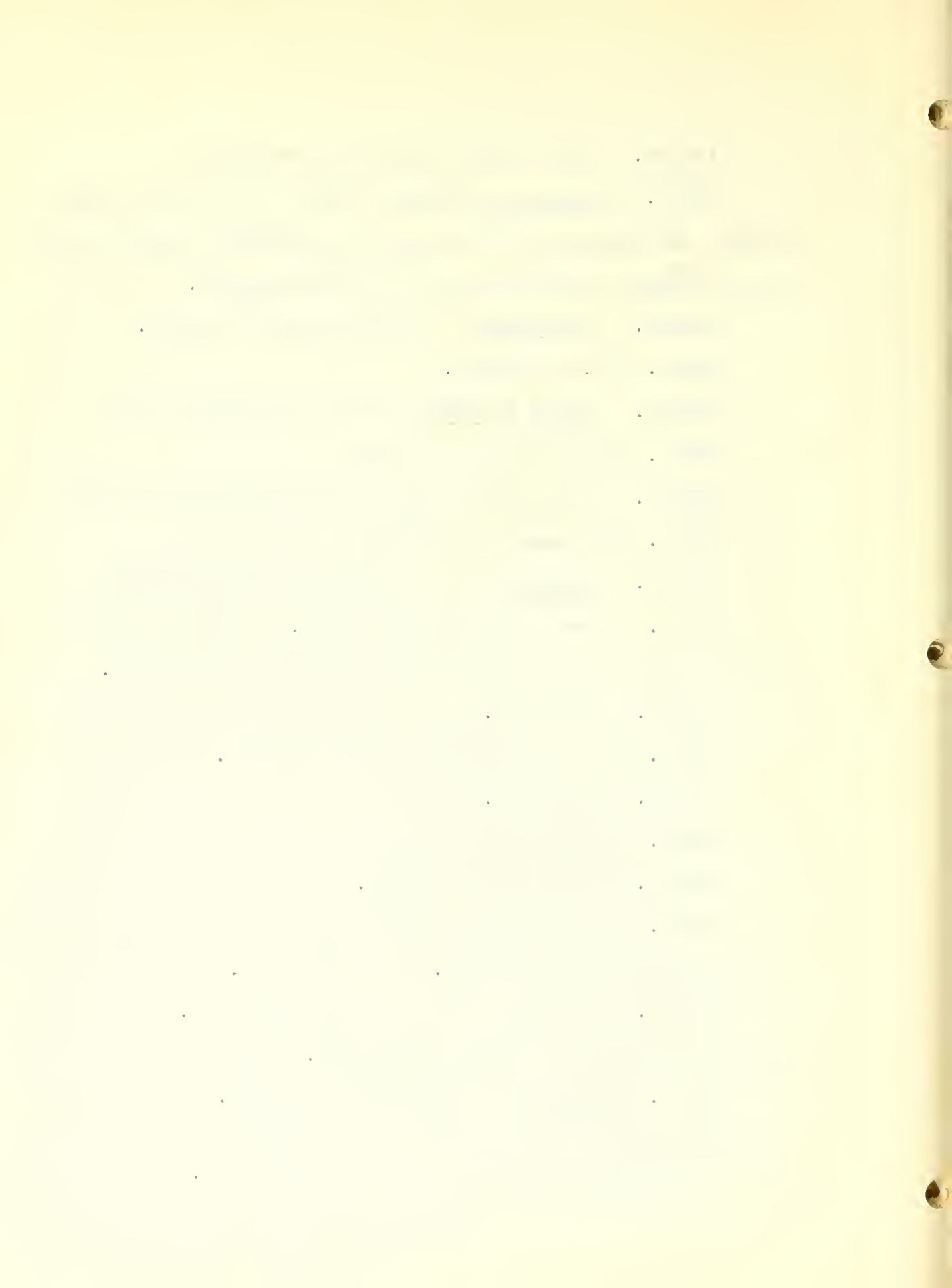
ANTONI. With my whole heart.

GENIO. You understand that in her state of mind, furious haste would be out of place. I rely on you.

ANTONI. You can count on me as on Zawisza!^{*} I will survey the land and give you a report.

GENIO. (Rising) I shall leave happier.

* A Polish hero of the early fifteenth century.



ANTONI. Then I may expect you?

GENIO. As soon as possible. Only be careful, I beg you, and meanwhile keep it quiet!

ANTONI. Ha, ha, ha! What a man you have become! In Warsaw they won't recognize you.

GENIO. Be still! Let me alone! (He approaches the girls.) May I bid you farewell?

MANKA. You are leaving?

GENIO. I have duties. I must, but I leave with the hope that we shall meet under more favorable circumstances.

(Aside) Didn't I say too much?

MANKA. You will certainly visit Pan Antoni?

GENIO. I should like to.

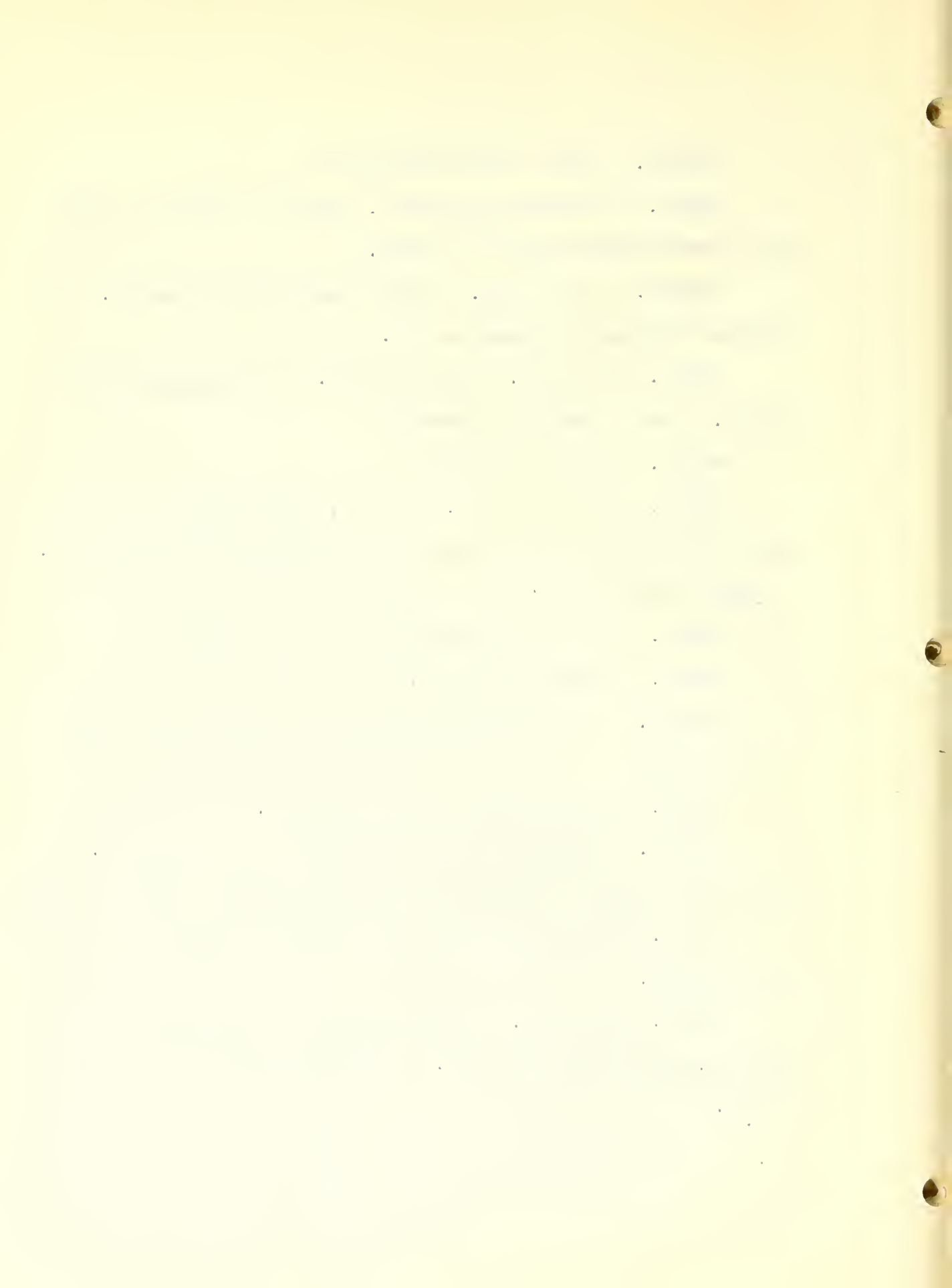
HELENA. If you do, perhaps we shall see you at our house also?

GENIO. If you ladies will permit it.

HELENA. (Jestingly ceremonious) Oh, my dear sir! (To MANKA, aside, nudging her with her elbow) Say something.

GENIO. (Offering his hand to MANKA) Then good-bye for the present.

MANKA. Good-bye. (GENIO kisses ANTONI on the face, and goes out on his tiptoes. HELENA nudges MANKA several times.)



SCENE III

ANTONI, MANKA, HELENA.

HELENA. He looked at you so; he even squeezed your hand, I think, but you were as quiet as the grave.

MANKA. Oh, please let me alone.

HELENA. (Kissing her) Stop frowning. You look as if you would like to cry.

MANKA. Stop joking. It seems to me that if I had to go through two more such scenes as that, I shouldn't even know how to cry and should become indifferent to everything. (ANTONI is still sitting in the same place, rolling a second cigarette.)

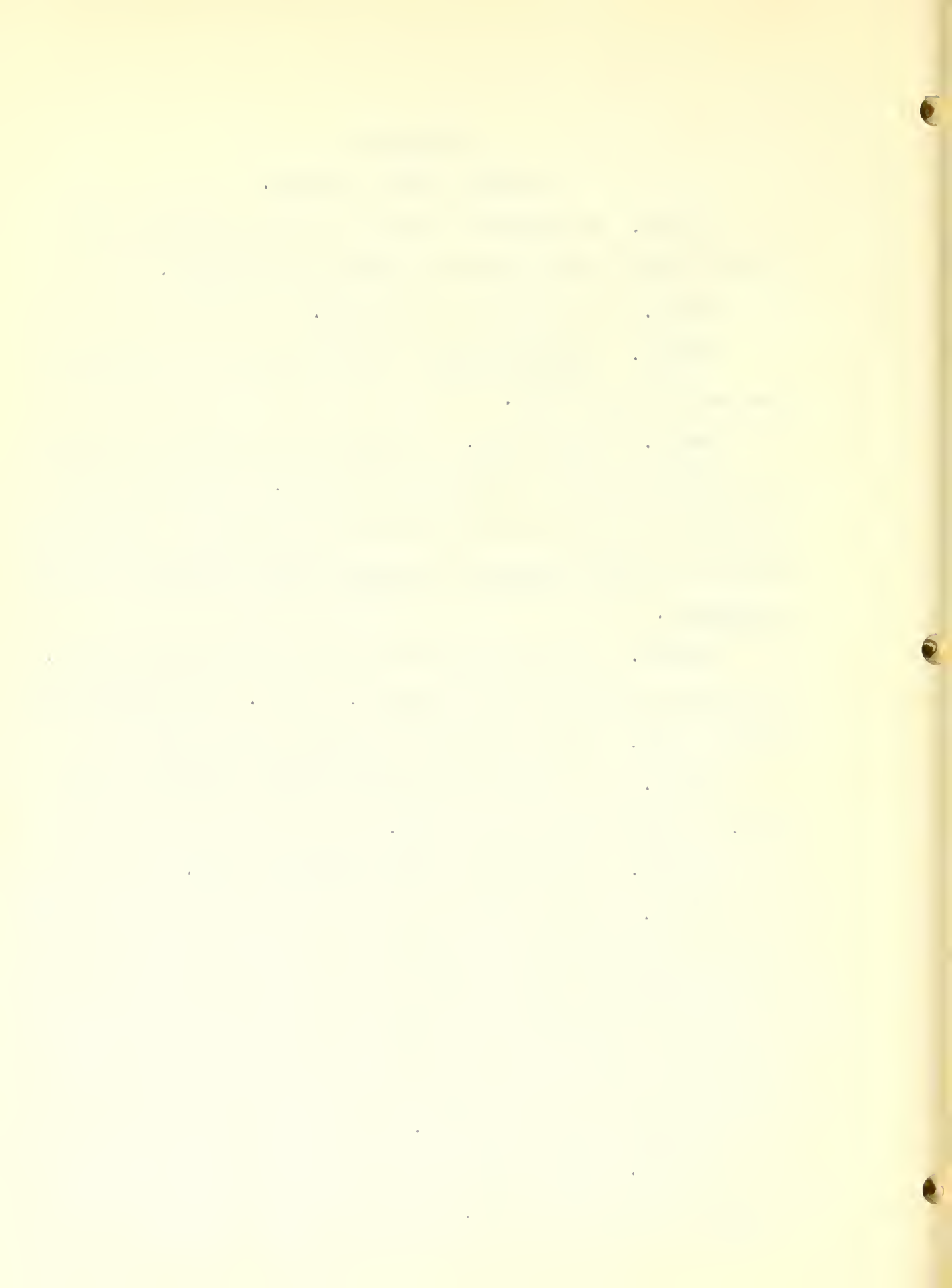
HELENA. But then you took it so to heart right away. How many times daddy gets excited, scolds! (Confidentially) Many a time, I tell you, he treats me so that it--

MANKA. If I should encounter similar behavior from him, I should fall at his feet!

HELENA. Oh, but you should just hear him!

MANKA. You are nice to try to comfort me, but you know well enough that this is something entirely different. If you father gets excited and scolds you, as you say, he shows his heart in that way. If anybody ever addressed me, it was with an insult; it seems to me that I'd give my life for a little bit of sympathy.

HELENA. Well, well, your bad luck is over now that daddy is taking you home.



MANKA. I will serve him on my knees!

HELENA. (Laughing) The idea of it! You'll see how well off you will be--only that you are accustomed to luxury, while in our house--

MANKA. (Reproachfully) Helena, dear, that hurts--

HELENA. Well, well, I'll not say anything more.--As soon as you get to know daddy more intimately you'll be convinced.--And when you grow calmer, (In a lower tone) perhaps we may bring him around somehow and you will have him.

MANKA. Whom? Seweryn? You must be joking.

HELENA. Then you don't love him anymore? (Louder) You're quite right.

MANKA. I hardly know myself how I feel towards him now.

ANTONI. (Lighting a cigarette, with a smile) May I inquire what Panna Helena so decidedly approves of? (He rises.)

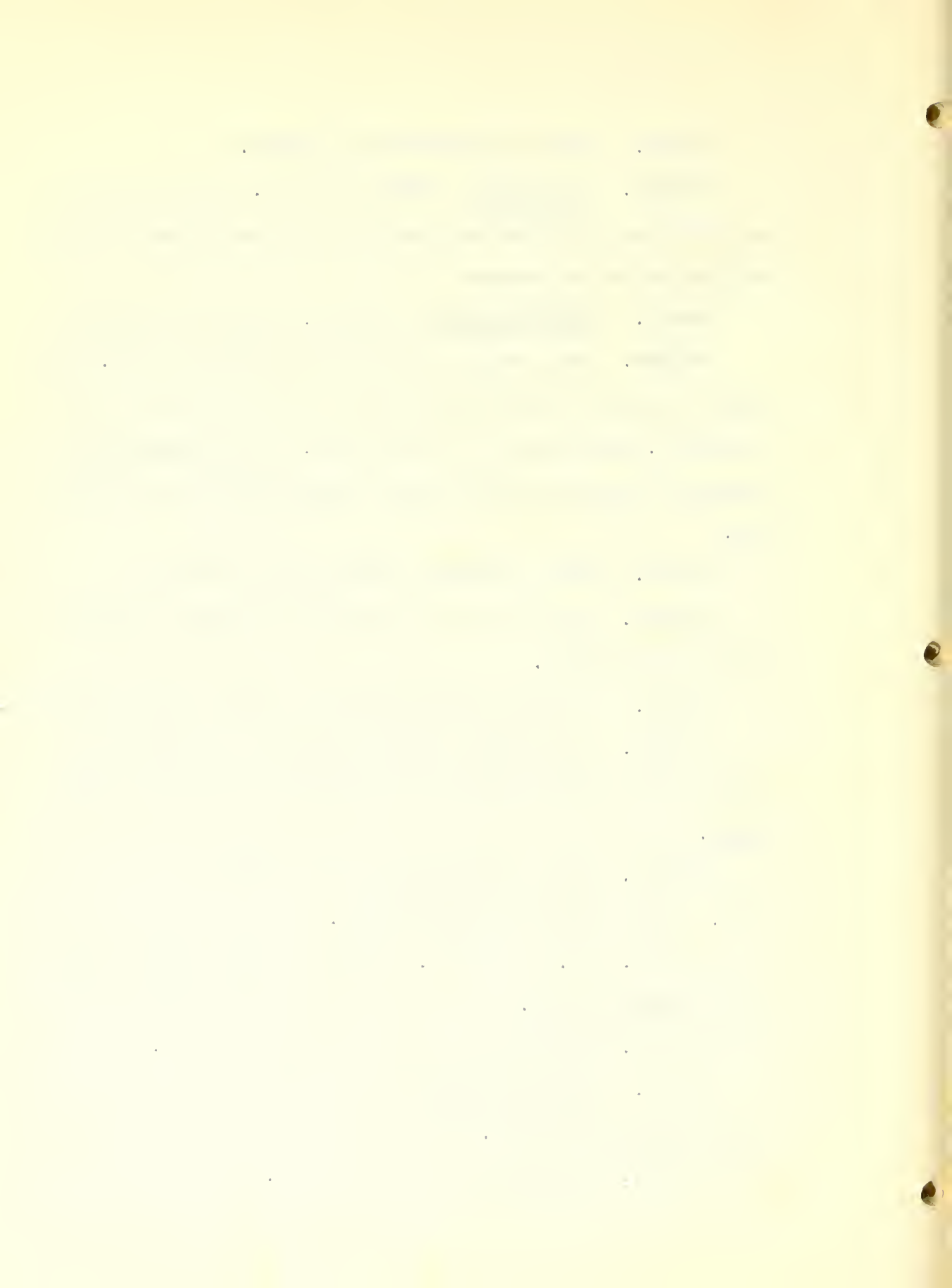
HELENA. (In a lively tone) Sit down there by yourself. Don't meddle in our affairs.

ANTONI. Oh! A secret! (He sits down again, continuing to look at them.)

HELENA. Tell me, tell me, for I am curious!

MANKA. (After a moment) Tell me, do you love him? (She glances at ANTONI.)

HELENA. (Quietly) Don't I though! Only I don't want



to show it much. I keep him on short rein.--My dear, don't look at him or he'll guess that we are talking about him.

MANKA. And you are happy, when you have him near you?

HELENA. I suppose so.

MANKA. You see, it was the same with Seweryn and myself. I sought occasions to see him, it was the greatest delight for me; and in order to accomplish this, I became a hypocrite, a liar. But now--I tremble at the thought of finding myself alone with him. I fear him like a corpse, for he is only a corpse to me now. That dread is the end of love.

HELENA. Just imagine, I experienced that same sensation, but at the beginning. I was afraid to remain with him when there wasn't anybody else around--I don't know why, myself; some sort of fright took possession of me. Now I'm not afraid of him. Oho! (She looks at him.)

MANKA. You're lucky, he's yours already.

HELENA. Mine, mine! Ah, how nice it is to say it--mine! (She snuggles up to her.)

MANKA. But if you should cease loving each other!

HELENA. Ah, don't say that! It makes me cold all over.

MANKA. Then you would avoid him, shouldn't you?

HELENA. (Thoughtfully) It seems to me so. (After a moment) I surely would. (After a moment) See, how strange it is in the world: the beginning and the end of everything are evident^{ly} just alike!--(After a moment, with naïve reflection) Just to think that everything must end,

that there is nothing assured.--Oh, Lord! (Both sit
down, ^{deep} in thought.)

SCENE IV

The same, PAN DAMAZY and TYKALSKA and, following them, the
NOTARY, come in from the right.

DAMAZY. Be good enough to leave me in peace, bless my
soul!

TYKALSKA. But I won't let you go, on my honor: what
would sister say to that? You have a number of miles ahead
of you and you won't get anything on the road.--I told them
to roast some chickens as quick as they could.

DAMAZY. If you'd pay me, I wouldn't eat 'em--on my
word!

TYKALSKA. So it seems to you, but nevertheless the
poor girls are hungry.

HELENA. (Rising quickly) What's the odds? I'm not.

MANKA. (Rising) Nor I.

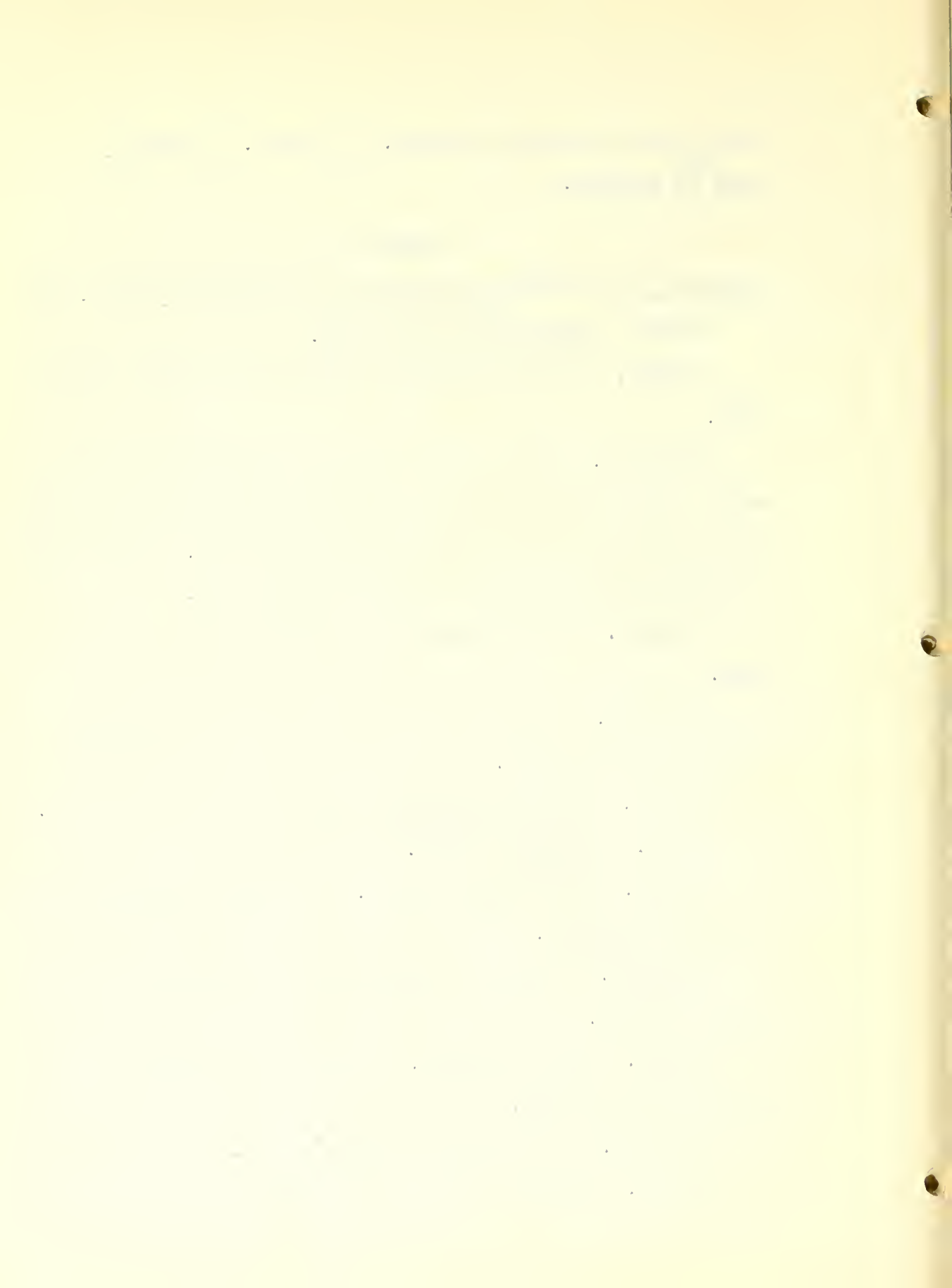
DAMAZY. Well, then forward! Get ready, bless my soul,
and we'll be going.

TYKALSKA. That won't help any--you people won't do
that to sister.

DAMAZY. Sister, sister! Sister looks at me as if
I'd eaten her father!

TYKALSKA. What are you talking about!

NOTARY. We hadn't finished--eh--eh--our conference,



when you refused to understand me, my dear sir, or rather you didn't pay attention to--eh--eh--eh--

DAMAZY. All that you've been saying--well, if you squeeze it out, there will be left, bless my soul, as much as--(He snaps his fingers.)

NOTARY. But permit me. (Aside to TYKALSKA) Don't let him go, please, for our interests depend upon it.

TYKALSKA. But I don't even think of it. This moment they'll be ready. (In a low voice to DAMAZY) I also wanted to speak a word more with you. (DAMAZY sits down on the sofa and taps with his cane impatiently.)

NOTARY. You haven't permitted me to tell you the final conclusion I have reached--eh--eh--eh--which, I am sure, you will approve.

DAMAZY. Well then, I will listen to that conclusion, but make it short and concise.

TYKALSKA. Come, girls, you must really have something to last you on the journey.

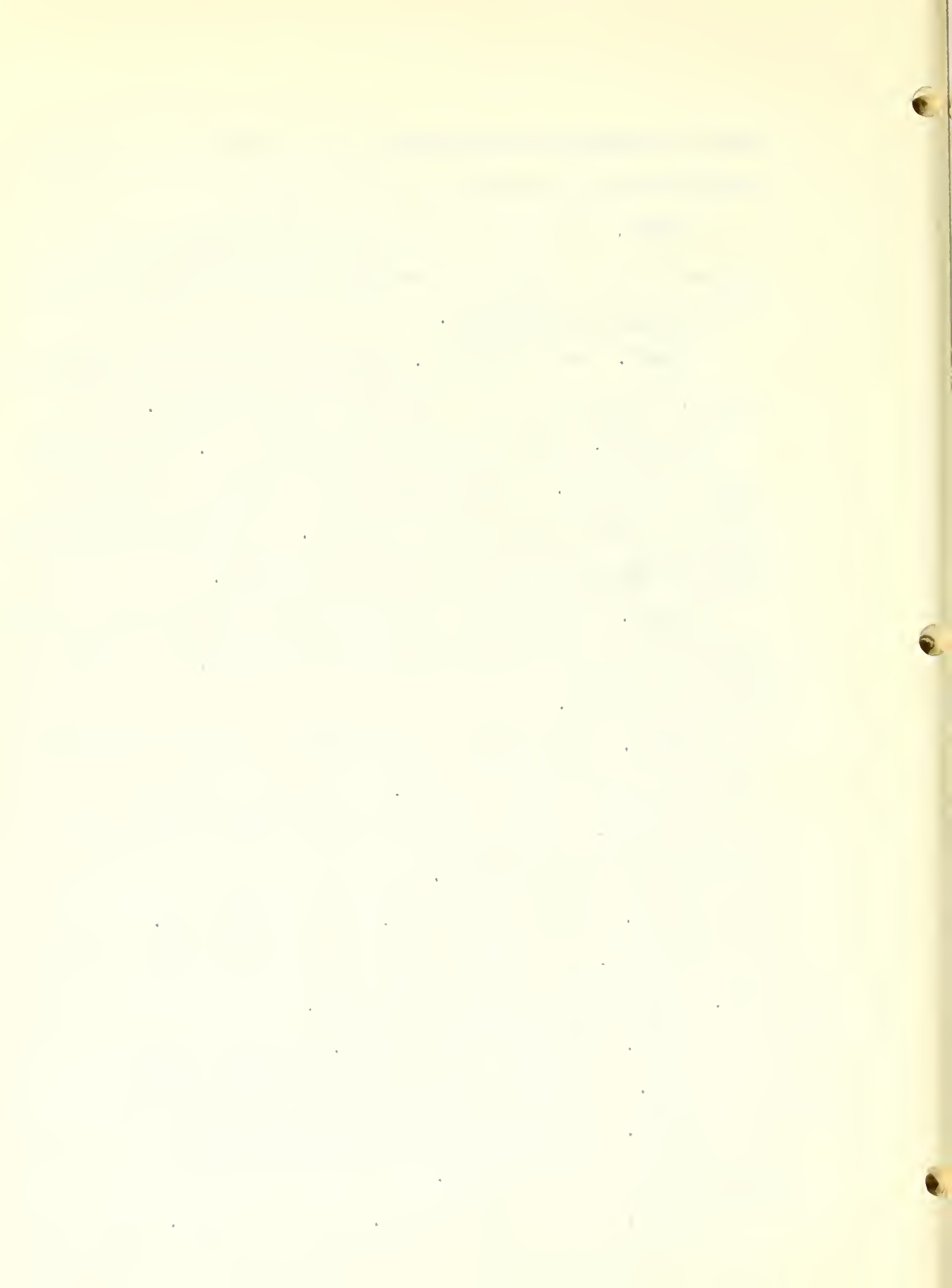
HELENA. Thank you kindly, but do excuse us.

TYKALSKA. No talking, come and don't stand in the way here. (She leads them off by force.)

HELENA. (Aside) Oh, heavens! We shan't get out of here today. (Running to her father) Daddy, will it be long?

DAMAZY. (Stamping with his cane, scolding) At least you give me a little peace!

HELENA. For heaven's sake! Let's go then. (They go



SCENE V

PAN DAMAZY, the NOTARY

NOTARY. (Aside) That's the only way to shut his mouth.

DAMAZY. Well, then, talk. I am listening!

NOTARY. First of all, I call your attention--

DAMAZY. But cut it short, I beg you.

NOTARY. Eh--eh--eh--you must admit that the thought of reconciliation through the union of your daughter with the intended heir of your sister-in-law, Pan Seweryn, was thoroughly Christian.--My dear sir, it was sublime!

DAMAZY. It was knavery, sir! (He rises.)

NOTARY. But I call your attention--

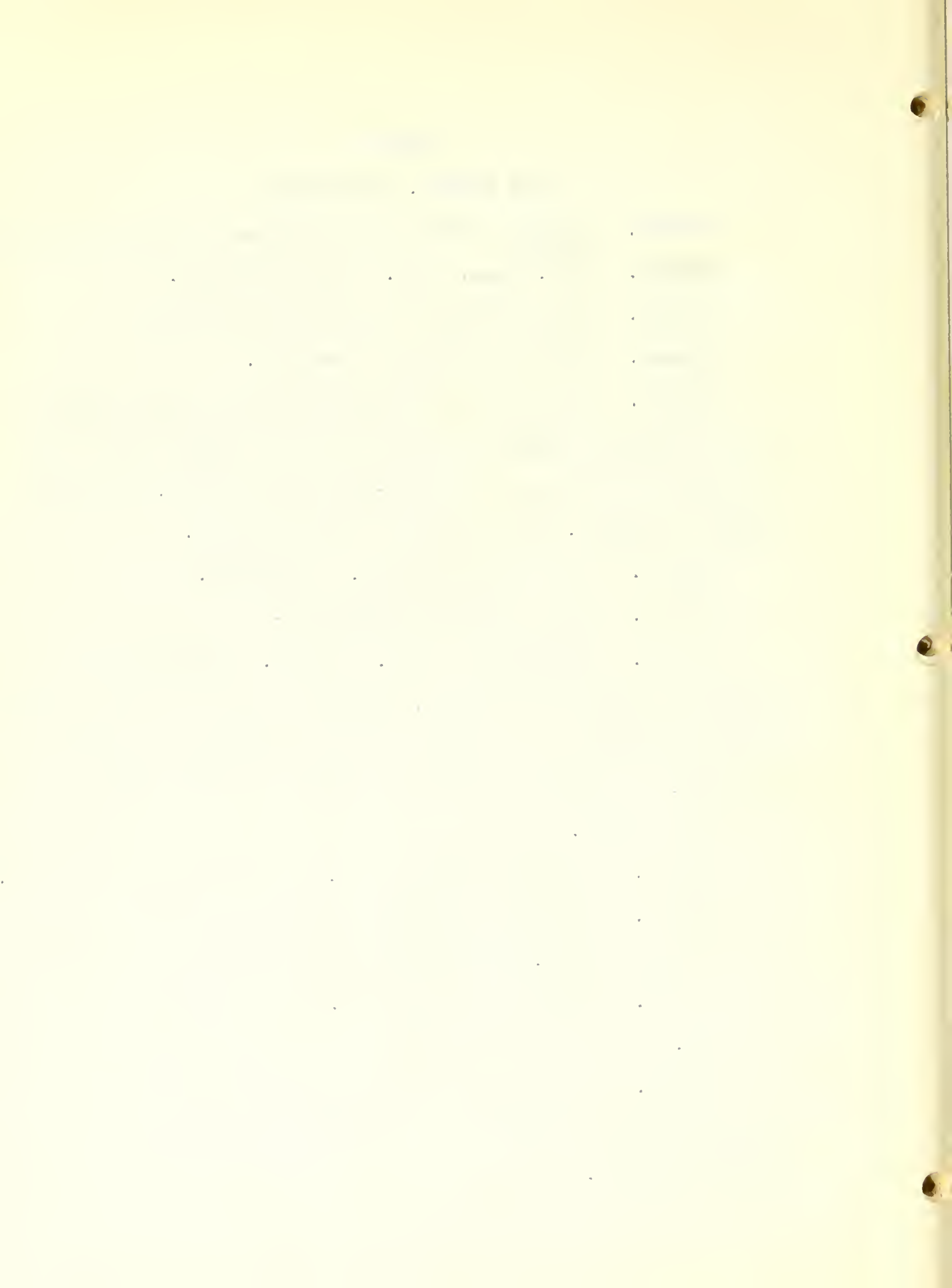
DAMAZY. (Violently) Vile! Barter! How ^{is it} that you turn your head the other way, bless my soul, when that scoundrel seduces the girl who is your ward; you throw her to him to be devoured, and, now, in spite of that you recommend him to me for a son-in-law!

NOTARY. We knew nothing of it, my dear sir, on my honor!

DAMAZY. (Quickly looking him in the eyes) Are you trying to turn my head.--Who warned me about it?

NOTARY. (Glancing around) Sh! You gave me your word of honor.

DAMAZY. You yourself opened my eyes to this mess, bless my soul; and as a result, I broke off, and now you call it a sublime thought.

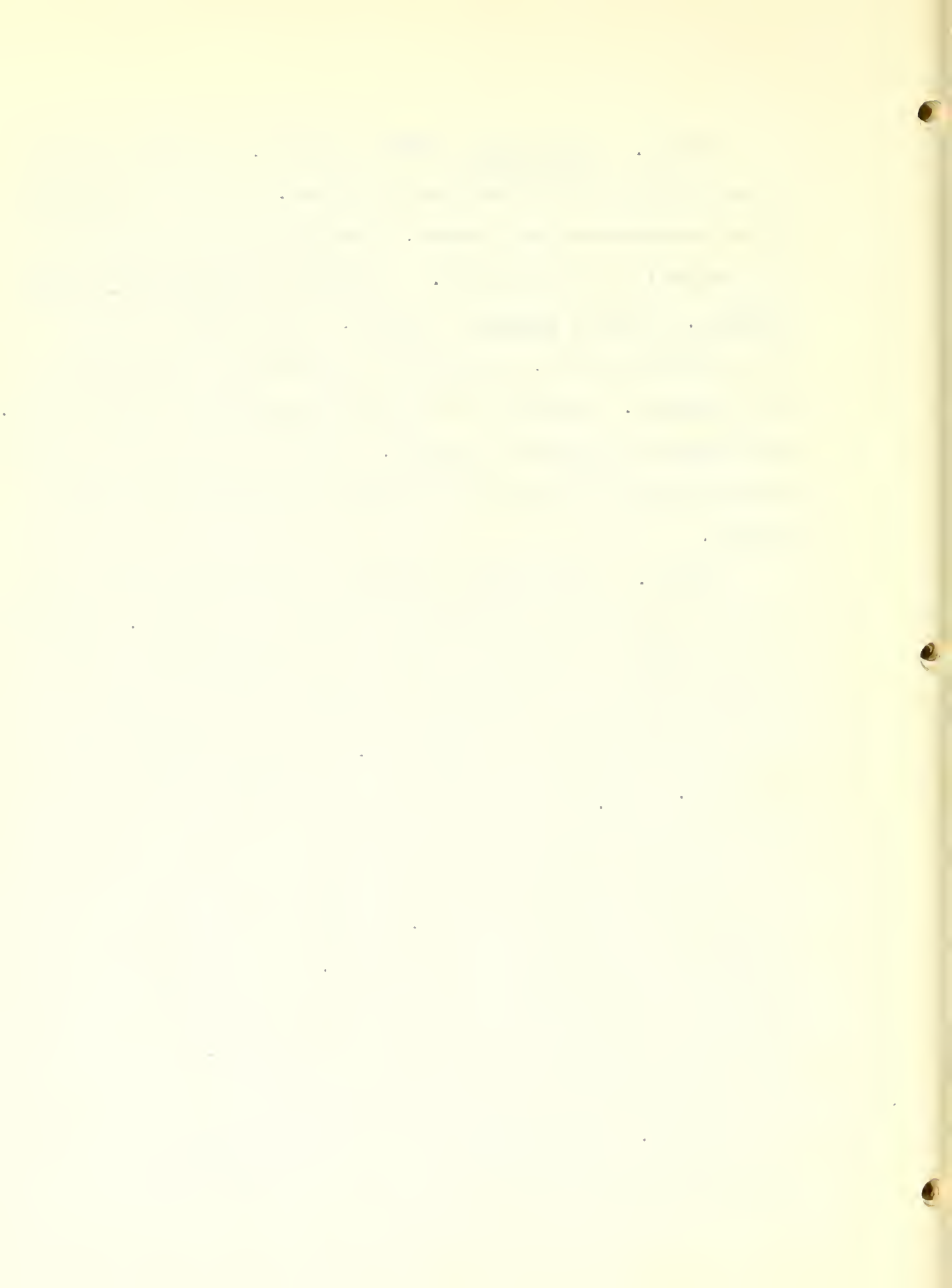


NOTARY. (Bewildered) When I say we, I simply mean by it my client, who is your sister-in-law. Such is the custom of--eh--eh--eh--of us lawyers. ~~That is~~ ^{of this is} The best proof, that she heard it first from you. (DAMAZY sits down on the sofa puffing. After a moment) Finally, I was aiming at this-- you have broken off, and there is no chance of returning to the question. How much it cost Pani Zegocina, I need not say. Her heart--eh--eh--is disturbed. She feels the need of making some sacrifice which might at least in part atone for that deceit.

DAMAZY. (Impetuously, rising. I don't need any sacrifices, bless my soul; they would stick in my throat. (Walking up and down) If I had the right to the inheritance, to the whole estate of the deceased, I would take it as my own without the slightest scruple, on my word, if not for myself, then for my child. But since such was not his desire, let it go. I will do without it, and I don't need any favors.

NOTARY (Aside) It is necessary at any cost that he resign all claims of any sort. (Aloud) My dear sir, you have mentioned the desire of the deceased. His widow, knowing the secrets of that sublime soul and his hidden purposes, which--eh--eh--eh--through his mad love for his wife, and knowing her heart, he did not wish--eh--eh--eh--

DAMAZY. (Impatiently) Have a little mercy, for I am melting with emotion, like butter in a frying-pan, and you



will not have anybody to talk to.

NOTARY. Well then, to come to the point, your sister-in-law, knowing that the deceased had in mind the idea of giving a dowry of some sort to your daughter, has set aside for her fifty thousand Polish zlotys, or seven thousand five hundred rubles. (He wipes his forehead.)

DAMAZY. (Relenting) Hm! Fifty thousand.

NOTARY. (Quickly) Engaging to pay it in three years' time, when her affairs are a little more in order--and meanwhile offering interest at five per cent. (After a moment, breathing deeply) What do you think of that?

DAMAZY. (After a moment) Fifty thousand--hm! Let me tell you! Devil take both of you!--Flies are good for the dogs, as they say.--I shouldn't care about it for myself, but since it's for my daughter--then, (With an impatient wave of his hand) I accept, and confound you all!

NOTARY. (Offering his hand) Then it's agreed! (Aside) I went a little too far--he agreed easily. (Aloud) Then give ^{us} ~~me~~ just a little note, my dear sir, accepting that agreement, and releasing your sister-in-law from every possible and impossible claim: a pure formality, as you see, since she has an incontestable right to the whole estate.

DAMAZY. (Suddenly) But pardon me, what about the orphan?

NOTARY. What orphan?

DAMAZY. Little Marya.--It would be a fine thing if I



accepted something for my daughter and didn't lay claims for that girl!

NOTARY. But my dear sir!

DAMAZY. Otherwise I have nothing to say. She gets as much as Helena, or our friendship is over!

NOTARY. I call your attention--

DAMAZY. That's no use: if you will, that's all right; if you won't, all right, too. If there must be a row, so be it. That girl must get something; and if that can't be arranged harmoniously, I'll consult lawyers.

NOTARY. (Aside) You're smart. (Aloud) Be pleased, my dear sir--eh--eh--eh--

DAMAZY. I have nothing to say!

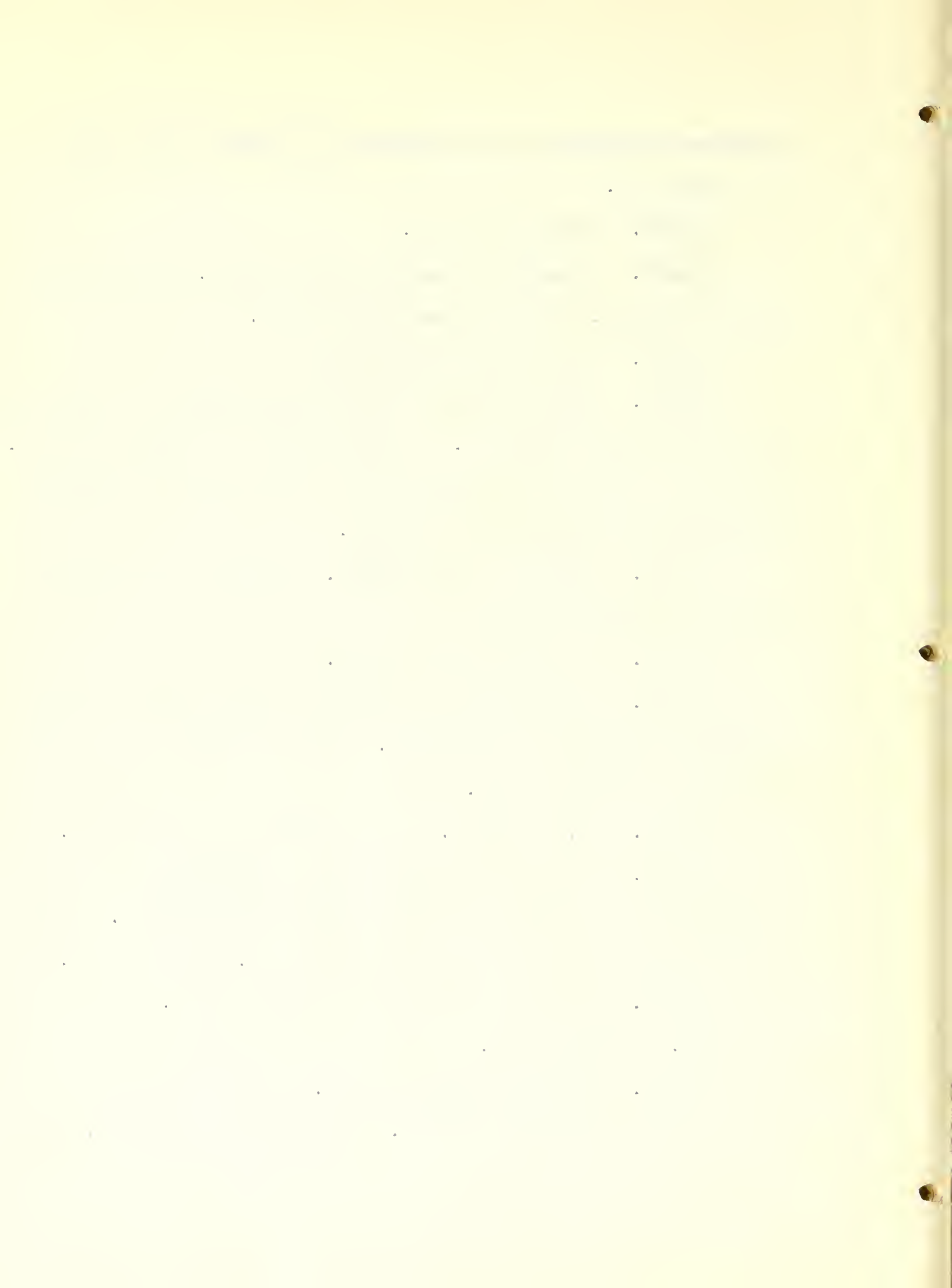
NOTARY. (Desperately, raising his voice) --to consider that this exceeds my competence. I had authority only about the sum for Panna Helena.

DAMAZY. No, I say no. Let me alone, and clear out!

NOTARY. But permit me--(Wiping his forehead) I must first talk things over with my--eh--eh--eh--superior. (Aside) It is necessary to make this sacrifice too.--That's hard!

DAMAZY. Well, do it quick: one, two, three! I'll wait a second. Please hurry.

NOTARY. (Sighing deeply) Phhh! To have to do business with such an uncivilized brute! (Goes out at the left.)



SCENE VI

PAN DAMAZY, later TYKALSKA

DAMAZY. The old hypocrite! Bless my soul!--They won't go the straight road: first one way, then another!-- They make a show of sacrifice, when they are raking it all in. (After a moment) But what of it! Since the deceased left it to her, then let the Lord help them. He was a weak man, and that's that!

TYKALSKA. (Peering through the door at the right) They're all through talking now. (She comes in. After a moment) They'll be here in a half-hour.

DAMAZY. Who? What?

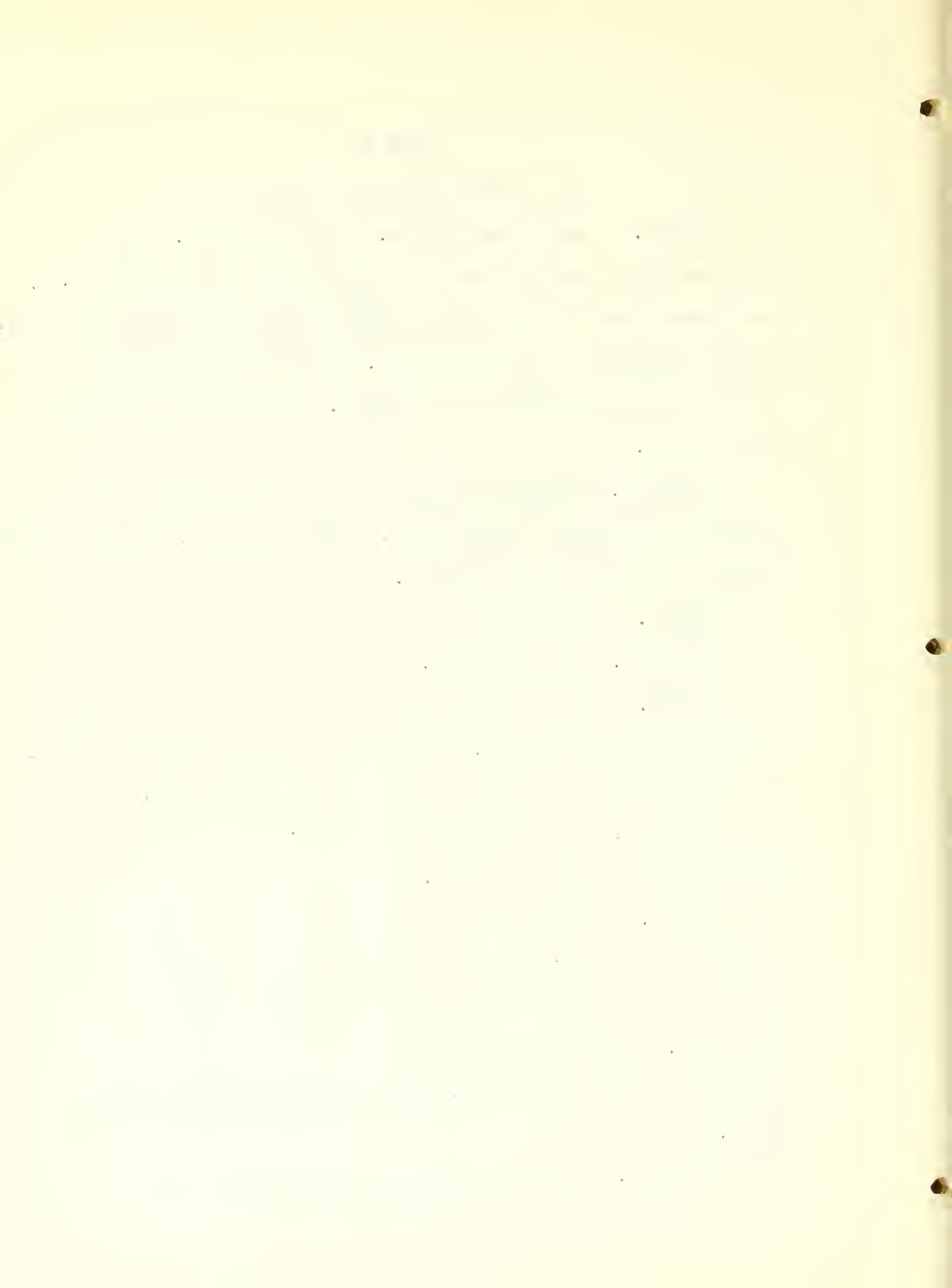
TYKALSKA. The chickens.

DAMAZY. (Impatiently) Let me tell you that I've had enough of those chickens!--However, have 'em brought anyhow.-- I'll wrap 'em up in paper, and that'll settle that.

TYKALSKA. The deceased Toby wouldn't start out on the road hungry to save his soul.

DAMAZY. He must have had, pardon me, the weak nature of a woman, bless my soul, for it is only you women who are able to eat at all times, whether you feel like eating or whether you don't.--Well, what did you have to say to me? I'll listen as long as I have the time. (He takes out a large silver watch.)

TYKALSKA. (After a moment, sitting down) Oh, my dear



sir, in this sad world--God save us!

DAMAZY. That's true enough, but what next?

TYKALSKA. What's happened here?--Dear Lord!

DAMAZY. (Testily) Well, it's your fault too--God help me!

TYKALSKA. Good heavens! My fault?

DAMAZY. How could you allow this to go to such extremes before your very eyes, bless my soul?

TYKALSKA. Oh, Pan Damazy! I, as they say, did not take my eyes off them. It didn't reach any extremes; I'd be a sinner to say anything else.

DAMAZY. Oh, you take my words the wrong way right off.-- A hungry man thinks only of bread.

TYKALSKA. (Offended.) Oh, ^{for} ~~in~~ the Lord's ^{sake!} ~~name!~~

DAMAZY. Why "^{for} ~~in~~ the Lord's ^{sake} ~~name~~"? You aren't getting offended, are you?

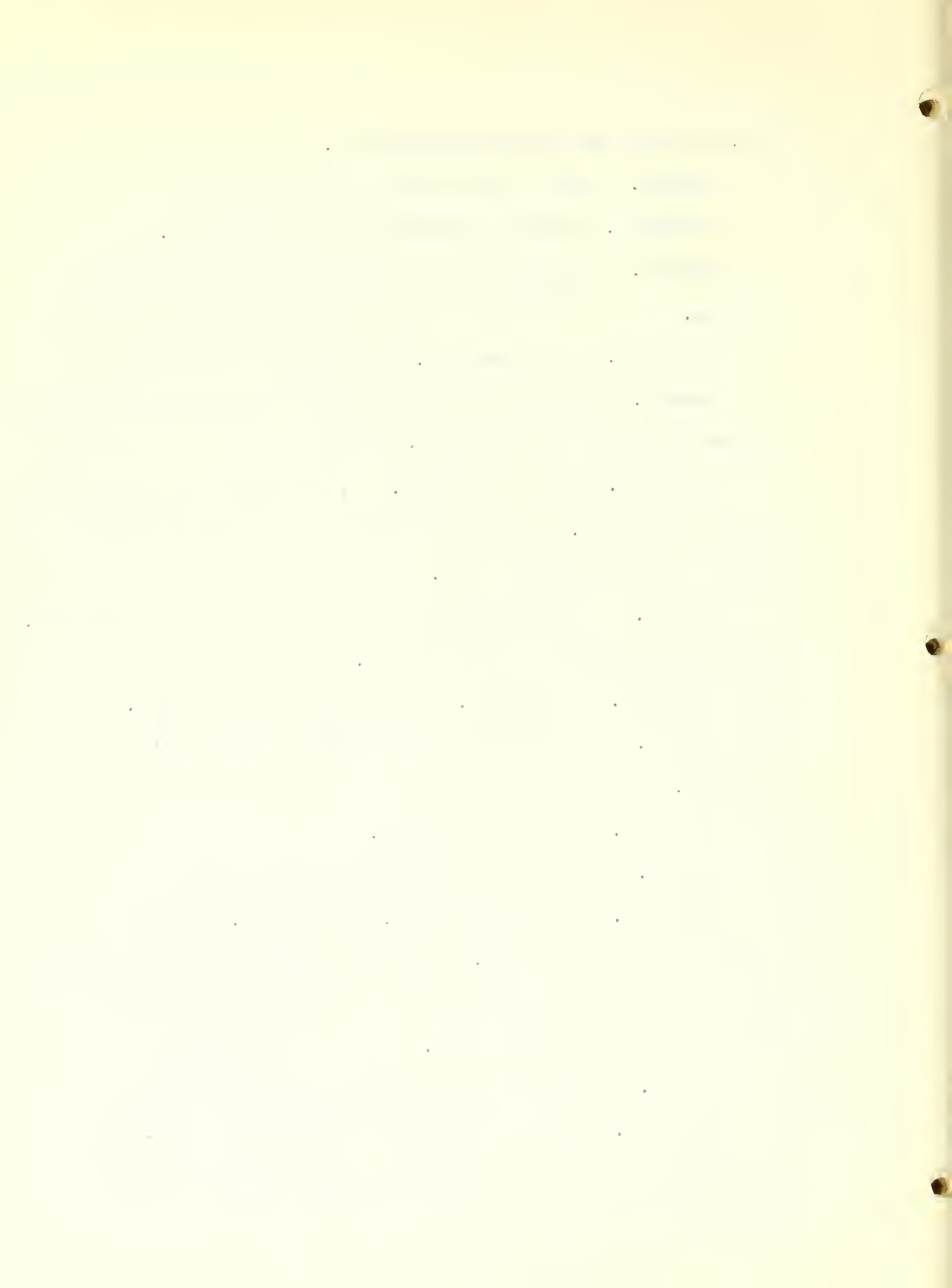
TYKALSKA. Oh, what an idea!

DAMAZY. Then you say that there was nothing bad?

TYKALSKA. But, Pan Damazy, on my word!--I am not a child, I don't need to tell you.--I saw that these children had an attraction for each other, but I thought, let them love each other--they'll be a fine pair.

DAMAZY. Hm, did you think so?

TYKALSKA. Why, of course! God is my witness!--I just thought to myself, sister will bequeath him, as her favorite, her estate; he will have more than enough and he won't need



to look for a dowry. And because his brother is earning his living on a small estate, then, what I have, I will bequeath to Antoni.

DAMAZY. (Amazed) What you have? Then we've been saving our pennies, bless my soul!

TYKALSKA. Ah! Take that back!--How could I save my pennies? Good Lord! You wouldn't find a cracked copper on me.--If a beggar met me on the road, I shouldn't have anything to save my face.

DAMAZY. Tut, tut, bless my soul! Then how do you expect to give, if you haven't anything?

TYKALSKA. (In a low voice) You see, I have a legacy.

DAMAZY. A legacy? From whom?

TYKALSKA. From the deceased.

DAMAZY. From my brother? He willed you something?

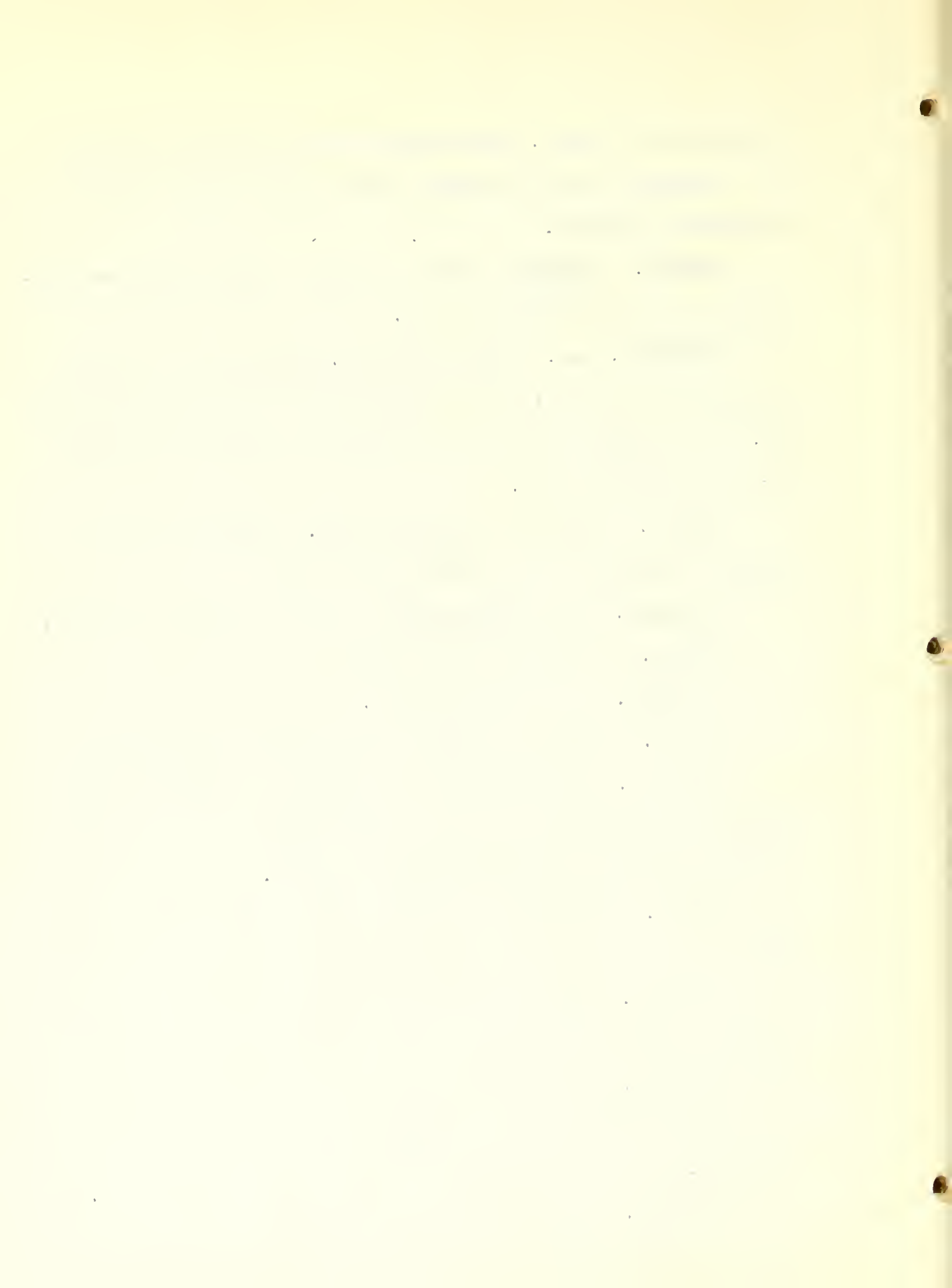
TYKALSKA. (Explaining) On my word, I shouldn't have known anything about it, but shortly before his death, he called me in and secretly gave me a paper.

DAMAZY. Really! And haven't you bragged about it until now?

TYKALSKA. It would have been lying in the trunk until my death, and then anybody to whom I had assigned it, would have taken it.

DAMAZY. Stuff and nonsense! First you must get it for yourself.

TYKALSKA. Ah, for heaven's sake! Will it ever be lost



DAMAZY. But you should tell her about it.

TYKALSKA. Ah, I wouldn't have done that for anything in the world!

DAMAZY. You're a good one! Then how will things turn out? And besides, who forces you to depend on anybody when you can have your own?

TYKALSKA. Oh, my dear sir, what's wrong with me here with my sister? I shan't lack bread.--And she'd never get on without me--all the woman's work here is on my shoulders. Besides, my dear sir, does a person live for himself only?

DAMAZY. Hm, hm,--very nice, I must say, but-- And is it a large sum?

TYKALSKA. Thirty or forty thousand--for I don't understand these rubles.

DAMAZY. Well, I congratulate you, bless my soul. And what are you thinking of doing with this bequest?

TYKALSKA. That's just the point, my dear sir, that I wanted to ask you about. I don't want to take it: God forbid! Oh, good Lord, I should have to swindle my sister! But it's mine just the same, so I wanted to will it to somebody after my death. I thought of Antoni, for I was sure that Seweryn would marry Manka. But since sister has sent that poor child away--

DAMAZY. Well, I am taking her in, bless my soul.

TYKALSKA. That's very nice. But you aren't over rich

yourself. You can't tell me that.

DAMAZY. Well, I must admit it.

TYKALSKA. So you see, I wanted to divide it between the two of them. How do you advise me?

DAMAZY. Really, on my word, (He kisses her hand) my sister-in-law is not worthy to carry water for you, bless my soul.

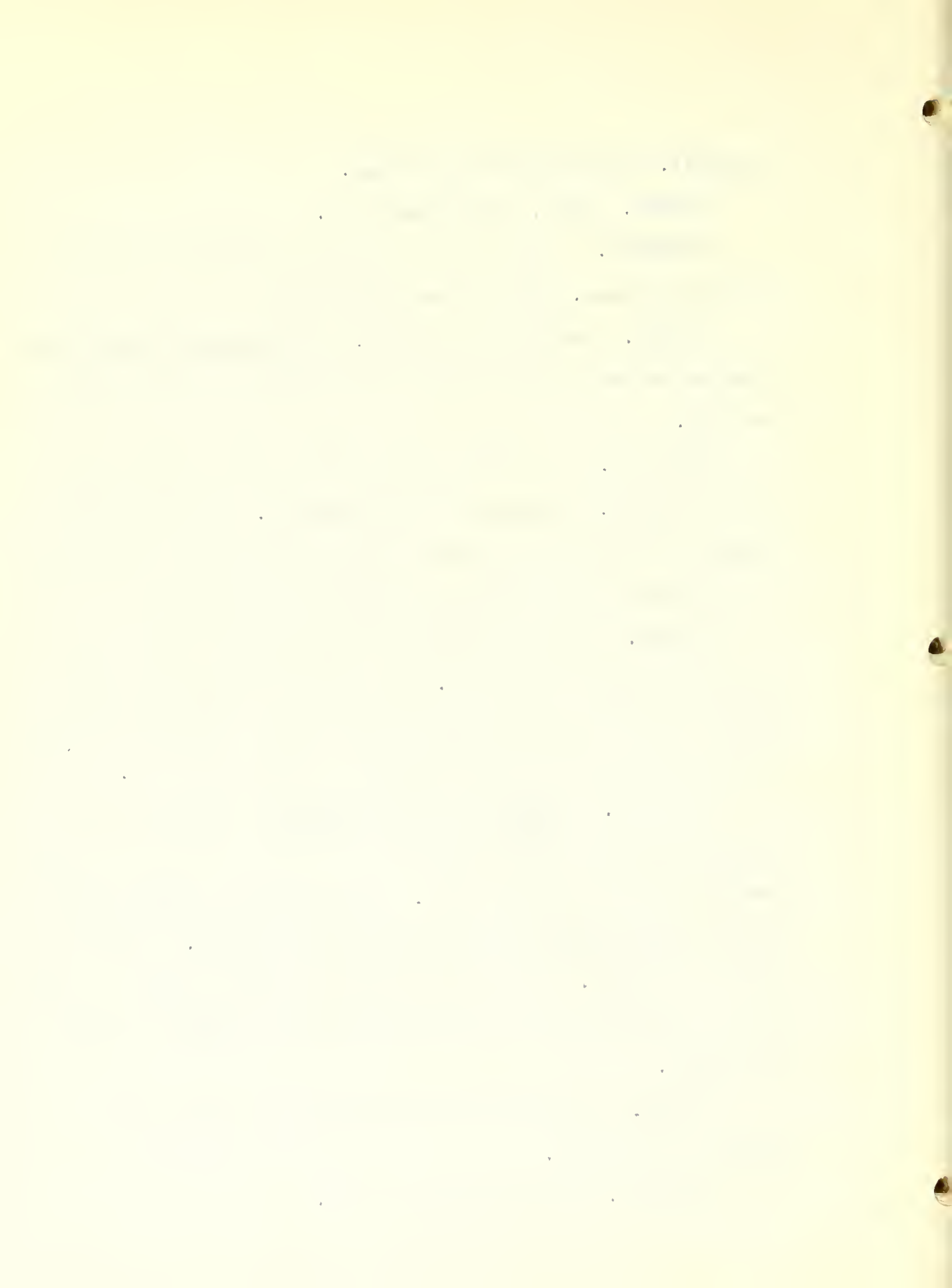
TYKALSKA. Oh, what's this now? She's a lady--I am a plain woman, although her blood-sister. The deceased Toby was an honest man, but a peculiar breed, I don't need to tell you; and I also grew queer living with him.

DAMAZY. But what are you talking about? You are a saint and that's the truth! And where do you have this will? Is it at least according to legal form? My deceased brother couldn't have done anything wiser than that.

TYKALSKA. (Reaching in her blouse) Only, my dear friend, advise me well what I am to do, so as not to embarrass my sister unnecessarily. (She protects herself from DAMAZY, who stretches out his hand impatiently.) Please, sir, fie on you! People would say afterwards that I showed my appreciation for the refuge given me by being a greedy old woman.

DAMAZY. My dear lady, usually in old age people become most greedy.

TYKALSKA. There it is, read it.



DAMAZY. (Taking his glasses) His own handwriting.

TYKALSKA. Yes, of course, the poor man wrote it with his own hand.

DAMAZY. His hand was already trembling. (Tapping the paper with his finger) But such a will, bless my soul, is of the utmost importance! It means more than if it had been written by a notary before a hundred witnesses--I know that--although it's just a scrap, so long as it's in his own handwriting and dated--oh!

TYKALSKA. And is there a date there?

DAMAZY. There is, indeed.--And a signature, bless my soul, clearly legible. (He reads, mumbling at first, then aloud) "To my wife's sister, Dorota Tykalska, born Rumiakiewi^cz the widow of the late Tobjasz Tykalski, eight thousand silver rubles."

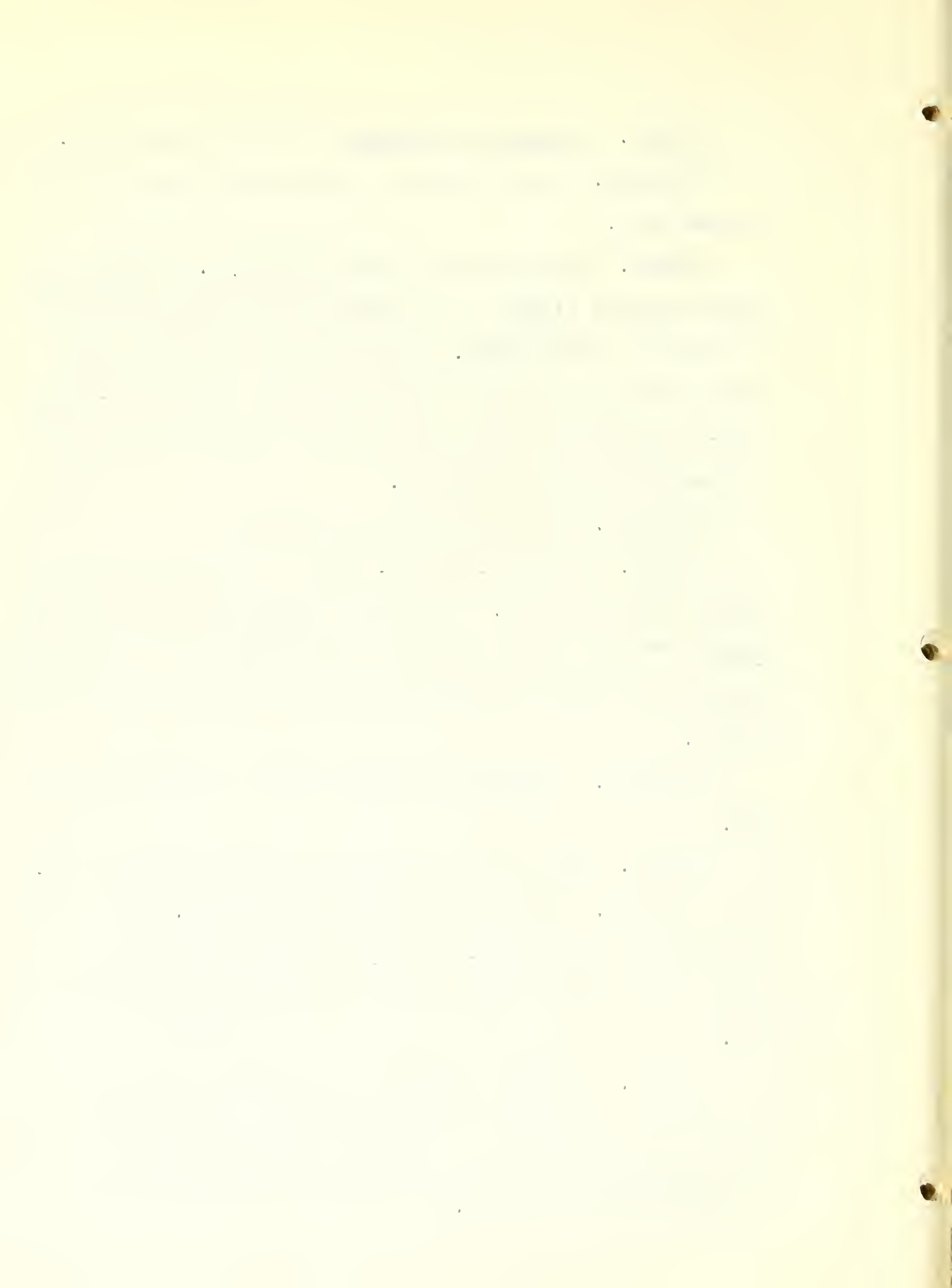
TYKALSKA. (Wiping her eyes) And he remembered Toby too!

DAMAZY. How's that? Did he will him something also!

TYKALSKA. You and your jokes--my heavens! Toby was already with the angels. What did he need there in the other world except a holy mass and a mention on All Saints' Day.*

DAMAZY. (Reads) "Wishing to assure her the benefits of this will, and at the same time to limit it in her own

* A reminder by the priest that the faithful should say prayers in his memory.



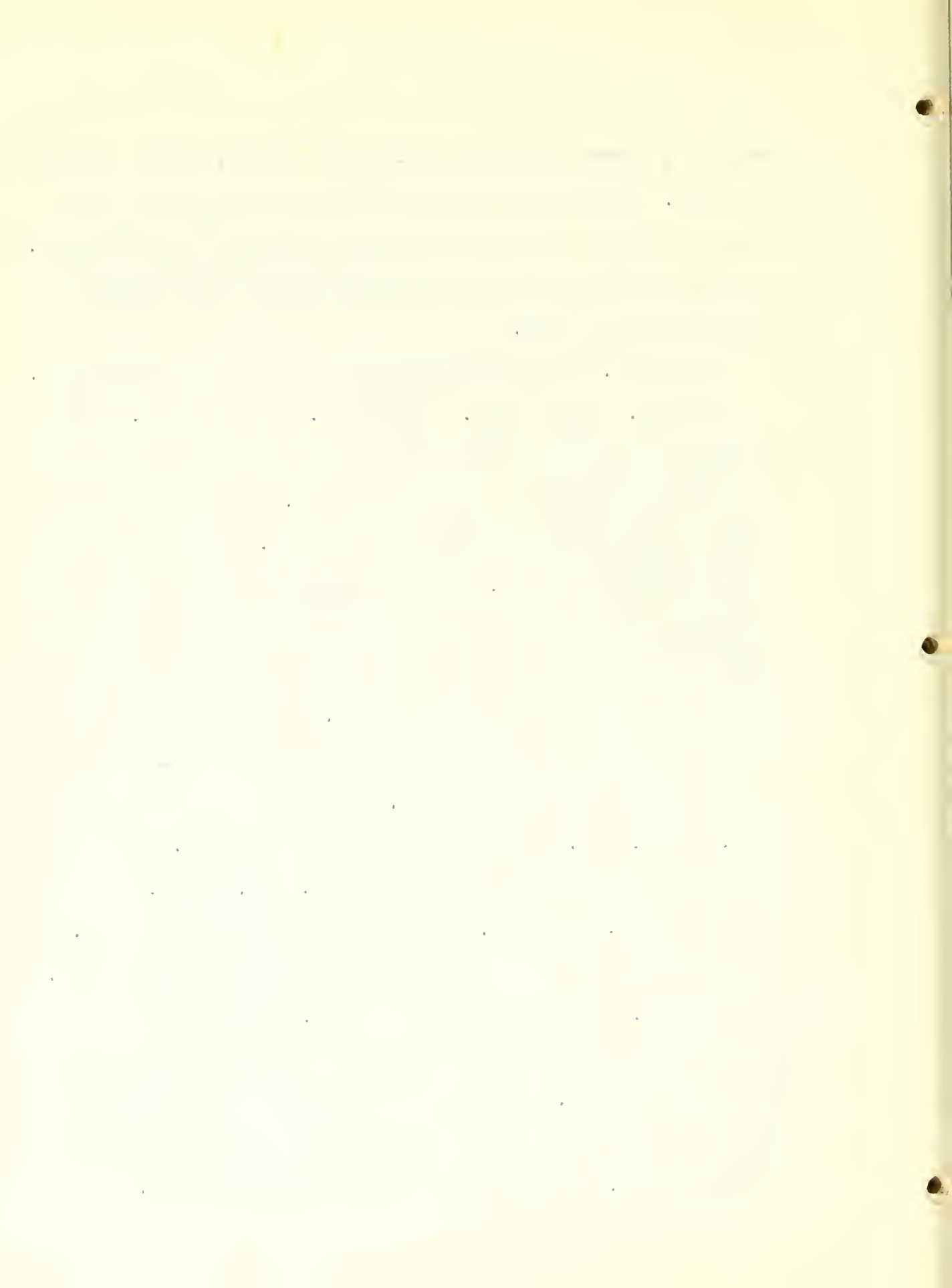
behalf, I order that that sum, 8,000 rubles, should remain in trust. The legatee cannot withdraw the capital; she must be content with five per cent interest till her death."-- And that's wise, for you would have given it all away; he knew you well, I see.

TYKALSKA. But I am allowed to do what I want with it.

DAMAZY. Wait, wait! (He reads.) Yes indeed!--"The heir whom the said Dorota shall designate by her will, shall have the right to withdraw this sum in full." I emphatically approve that idea of my deceased brother. You are at least not at anybody's mercy. (After a moment) What? what? what? (He reads) "This is the only legacy with which I burden the rights of my natural heir, whom I beg and enjoin that he do not refuse protection to my wife." (Vehemently) But this, bless my soul, brings to light new knavery!--So there was no joint will between them.--In such case, it is all mine! Mine! Ah! Now you see, murder will out!--That's why they pulled the wool over my eyes! Ha!--Wait!

TYKALSKA. Heavens! What have I done, my dear sir!-- I should prefer to withdraw my rights even to this legacy.

DAMAZY. (Greatly moved) Stupid!--I believed them blindly, not questioning anything, and they took advantage of my good nature. Well, could I foresee that they would reveal themselves so shamelessly?--Why, they're swindlers, bless my soul! Jews! All for the miserable penny!



TYKALSKA. My dear sir! My dear sir! What will happen? If anything comes to light in this against my sister, what shall I do? I'll bury myself in the earth!--You had better give it back. I don't want anything, not anything!

DAMAZY. Oh, it's too late, bless my soul!--I'll teach them how to whistle after church now!

TYKALSKA. (Weeping) Fie! Shame on you!

DAMAZY. Ha, ha, ha! What? That's good!

TYKALSKA. You curse greedy people, and you yourself are no better.

DAMAZY. Ha, ha, ha! I greedy!

TYKALSKA. (Kissing him on the shoulder) My dear sir!

DAMAZY. (Walking up and down) The will of the deceased-- the will of the deceased! They made a point of that--let his will be done then!

SCENE VII

The same. The NOTARY leads in by the arm ZEGOCINA, whose expression is half solemn, half sorrowful, and who holds her hand with a handkerchief to her forehead. When she has come in, she falls on the sofa as if bereft of strength. TYKALSKA crosses herself and whispers prayers in the corner; the NOTARY stands beside ZEGOCINA. At the end of the scene SEWERYN comes in.)

DAMAZY. Well, now there'll be a comedy, bless my soul.--
(He paces the room, looking at them from under his brows.)

ZEGOCINA. (After a moment, sorrowfully, aside to the
NOTARY) Who is to begin?

NOTARY. You might as well--it might even be best. (As
if calling DAMAZY'S attention) Hm, hm!

ZEGOCINA. (As above, in a weak voice) The notary has
communicated to me--your pretensions.

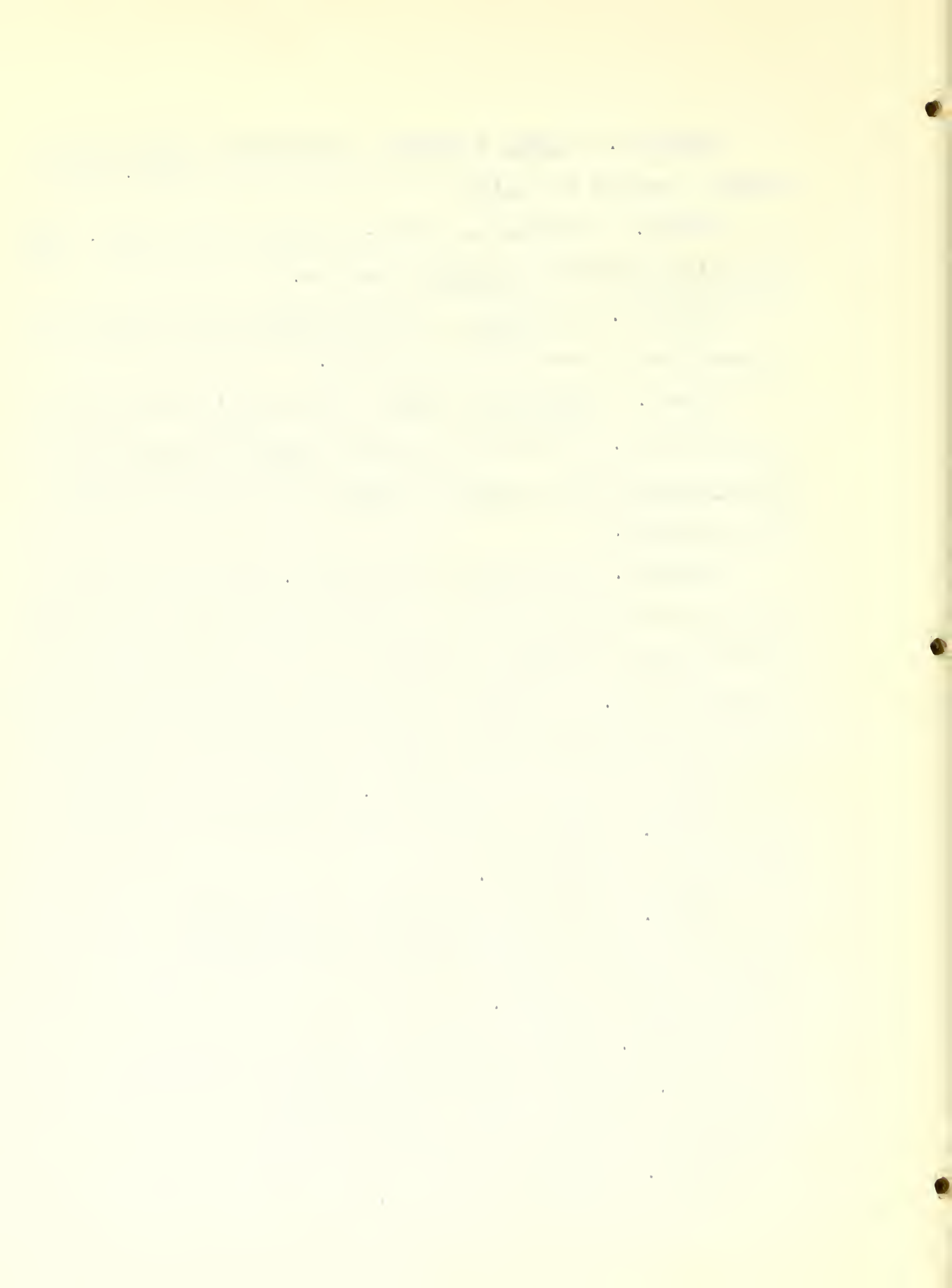
DAMAZY. (Through his teeth) They aren't pretensions,
bless my soul! (ZEGOCINA is silent, making a sign that he
does not give her a chance to speak) Well, I'm listening,
I'm listening.

ZEGOCINA. The blow was well aimed.--I, who my whole
life long have given proofs of disinterestedness, must today
humble myself to bargains which are to the last degree hum-
iliating to us. I thought that, when I guessed the unexpressed
will of my deceased husband and gave proofs of my regard for
his niece, I should be understood. Alas, it has happened
differently! People explained this as weakness on my part,
and wanted to exploit it.

DAMAZY. (Who has given signs of impatience) That is,
according to you, bless my soul, I am putting my hand in
another person's pocket.

ZEGOCINA. (With an ironical smile) I don't know what
to call it. You are coming forth in defence of the supposed
rights of a girl who by her own behavior--

DAMAZY. (Hastily) What's that? Then you don't feel



that you have this girl on your conscience!

ZEGOCINA. I have her on my conscience! (She raises her eyes to heaven and folds her hands in prayer.)

NOTARY. (In a low tone) Don't irritate him! (Aloud) You two are getting on the dangerous path--eh--eh--eh--of mutual reproaches. The best thing would be to forget it all and to make peace.--What's the use! (Slapping his palms together in a gesture of reconciliation) You, madam, make some sacrifice; and you, sir, let down a little in your claims. Let's sign a paper and be done with it! (To DAMAZY) What is your final demand for that girl?

DAMAZY. (Mockingly) Oho! That notion has flown away on the wind, bless my soul!

NOTARY. What's that? Flown away on the wind?

DAMAZY. You should have decided sooner. I have reconsidered now.

ZEGOCINA. (In a pained voice) I told you, notary, that it was useless. My brother is only torturing me.

NOTARY. (Restlessly) Then what is your ultimatum?

DAMAZY. (Pacing back and forth) My deceased brother left a fortune, bless my soul, which is a little too much for one person. (Gestures from the NOTARY and ZEGOCINA) There are several of us here who also would not disdain some small part of it.

ZEGOCINA. No, that's too much!--Notary, let us go!

you see to what you are exposing me by your concessions.

NOTARY. (In a low voice) Let me alone. We must find out what all this means.

DAMAZY. Besides myself and my child, there is little Marya; there is Pani Tykalska, your sister.

ZEGOCINA. What, even Tykalska comes forward with claims! The world has come to an end!

TYKALSKA. I, sister? I don't want anything, honestly.-- Let me be! (Aside) The dreadful man!

DAMAZY. Finally, aside from your favorite, whom you yourself must look out for, there is still another blood-relative, your nephew, Antoni.

ZEGOCINA. (Laughing spasmodically) And so to divide it all up!--A marvellous idea--the work of such an exuberant imagination that I did not expect it of you, brother.--But let us make one small, very small supposition, that is, that I don't agree to it.

DAMAZY. You can handle me like a child, bless my soul; I will withdraw and beg your pardon to boot, I will do so on one small, exceedingly small condition: that is, show me the will.

NOTARY. (Aside) Aha, he's grown wise! Well, it's all up!

ZEGOCINA. (After a moment, with an outburst, and rising as if on springs) So then, the mask has fallen at last!-- The will!--And consequently, if there weren't any, you would

of a sickly old man, in order to deprive a needy widow of her last piece of bread!

DAMAZY. (Not believing his ears) What !

NOTARY. (Aside) Only a woman could produce such an argument.

ZEGOCINA. Then all considerations are nothing! Fear of the justice of heaven is nothing! Oh, anyone who is capable of taking advantage of a situation in which he has found himself by chance--of such a man you can expect anything! (Weeping) I leave it all to God!--Come, notary.

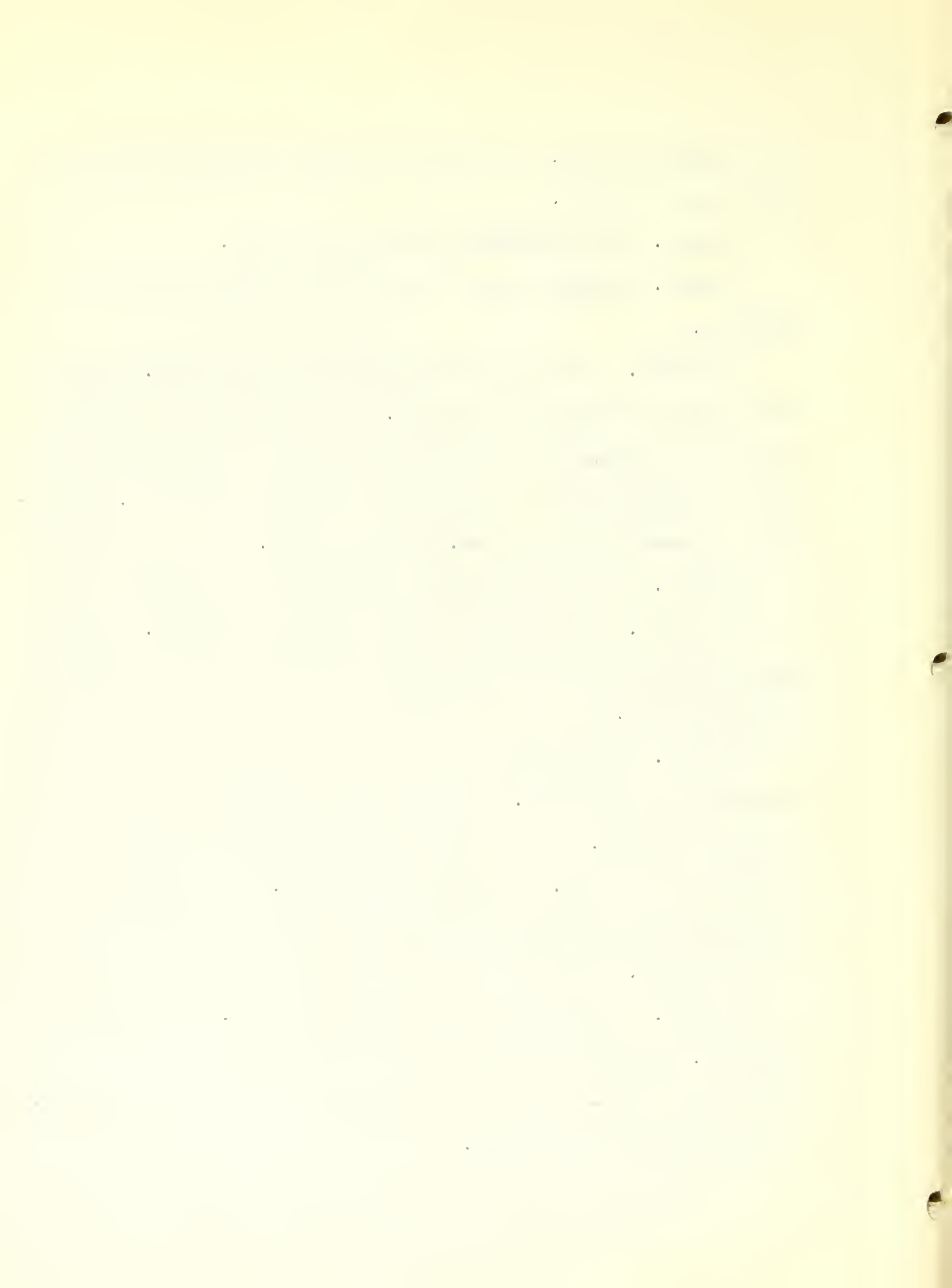
NOTARY. (In a low voice) But what will happen?

ZEGOCINA. We will leave him to his conscience. (She walks towards the door, leaning on the NOTARY, who lingers on his way out.)

DAMAZY. (Stupified) Whew, that's enough to turn one's stomach, bless my soul! (Beating his breast) So I am taking advantage of her! I am a grasper of somebody else's property! Oh, that's too much!--(He runs after them.) Pardon me, madam! (He seizes her arm and leads her to the front of the stage.)

ZEGOCINA. What's this? Violence?

DAMAZY. (Trembling with fury) Violence! As I love God -- violence! Ah, my dear lady, do you think that that pontifical face takes me in! that I will beat my breast and ask pardon! (ZEGOCINA goes into spasms,)



NOTARY. (Aside) Well, it's all off now!--I remain a widower. I must turn in another direction--with the wind--

ZEGOCINA. Heavens, heavens, to torture a defenseless and weak woman!

SEWERYN. (Looking in cautiously at the central door) What's happening here?

DAMAZY. I torturing you! But by God's wounds, am I not within my lawful rights? Haven't I gone a straight path, while you and your counsellor--

ZEGOCINA. Notary!--Where is he? (The NOTARY evades her; catching sight of SEWERYN, she stretches out her hand to him. Weeping) Seweryn darling! (SEWERYN goes to her.)

DAMAZY. Knowing how things stand, you dug pits under me, and you slyly tried to deceive me!

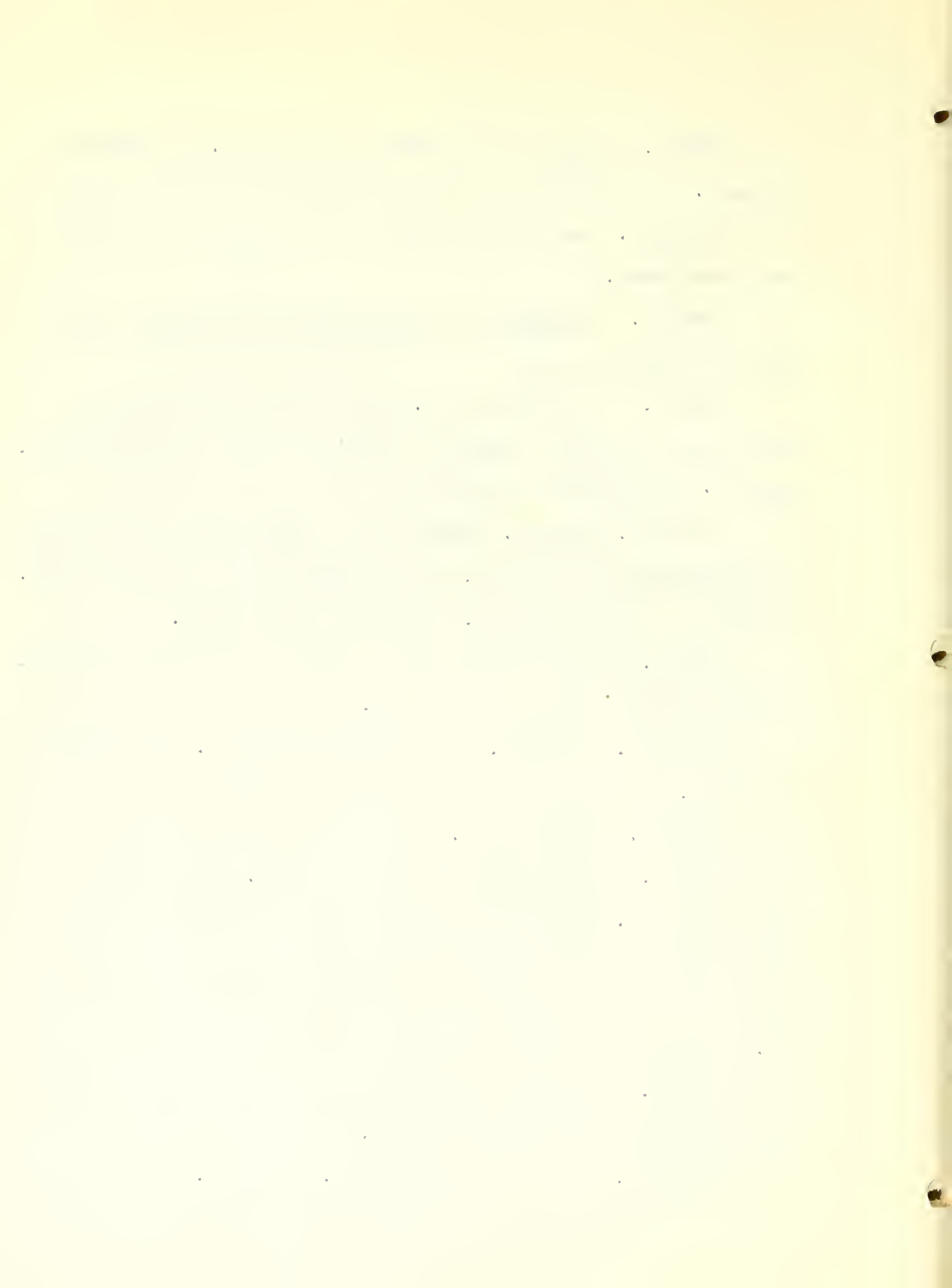
ZEGOCINA. Insults! (She weeps copiously. To SEWERYN) My child, do you hear?

SEWERYN. Let's leave.

DAMAZY. (In a passion) What insults!--How furious that makes me! (After a moment) You have a life interest in a fourth part, and the whole inheritance is mine: such was the will of the deceased, and it would be stupid to give it up.--I have a child--

NOTARY. (Standing near DAMAZY, in a low tone) Well, what's right is right, to be sure!

ZEGOCINA. Take it for yourself! Take it! Fill up on it!



DAMAZY. Of course I'll take it! Of course! As I stand here before you! (After a moment, more softly) But, nevertheless, confound it!--instead of a life interest, I will give up a fourth part to you for your own, hang you!

ZEGOCINA. I don't want anything! Take it all! Take my last shirt from me! Take my life! What do I care!

DAMAZY. Well, now you see!--She'll make a robber of me yet! (He paces the room.)

ZEGOCINA. (Choking with tears) Oh, my God, my God! (She goes out sobbing, leaning on SEWERYN.)

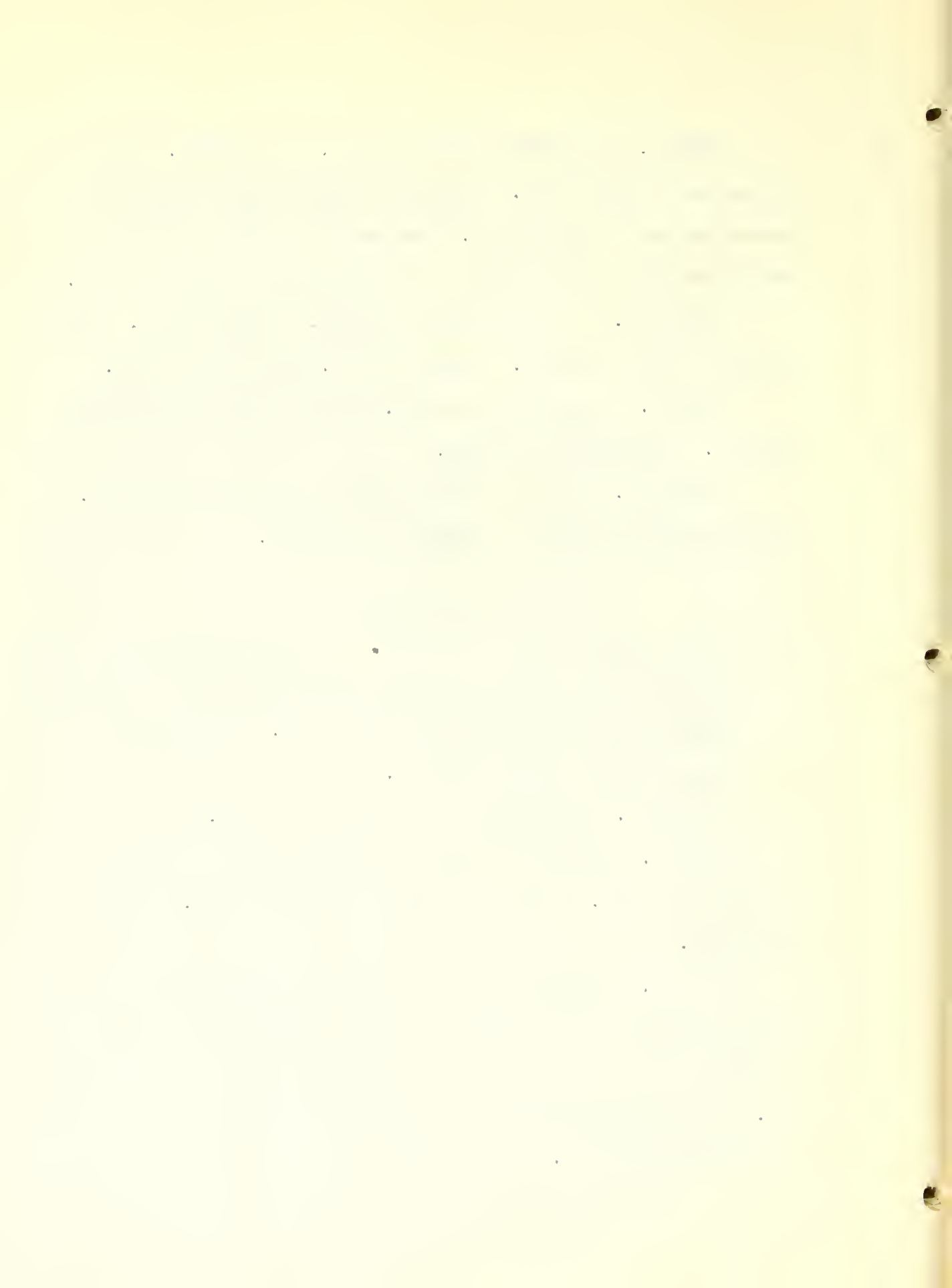
SCENE VIII

PAN DAMAZY, the NOTARY, TYKALSKA, HELENA and MANKA, who have just entered the room a moment ago from the right, and have stopped ~~frightened~~ frightened in the back. With them ANTONI has entered; later SEWERYN.

TYKALSKA. (Sobbing) Oh, my God, my God!

DAMAZY. Well, what is it? What's she blubbering about? Someone tell me! That's the way with old women! (He paces the room.)

NOTARY. (Walking with outstretched hand after DAMAZY, who does not listen, and pays no attention to him) I honor, *my* honored sir, that you have no--ch--eh--eh--hard feelings for me. As the plenipotentiary of your sister-in-law, I fought to the last breath. When vanquished, I capitulate with the



honors of war. (Aside) There's no help for it; I must work in the interests of Genio--that will be wisest. (After a moment, aloud) Now if my knowledge of things--eh--eh--eh--might be useful.

TYKALSKA. (As before) I am to blame for it all!

DAMAZY. (Ironically) Of course! You are to blame, that's clear enough! And I, too, I suppose?

TYKALSKA. Yes, you are! (She explains aside to ANTONI what has happened.)

DAMAZY. As I love God, that makes me split with laughing!

TYKALSKA. (As before) Split then, split! But don't persecute us!

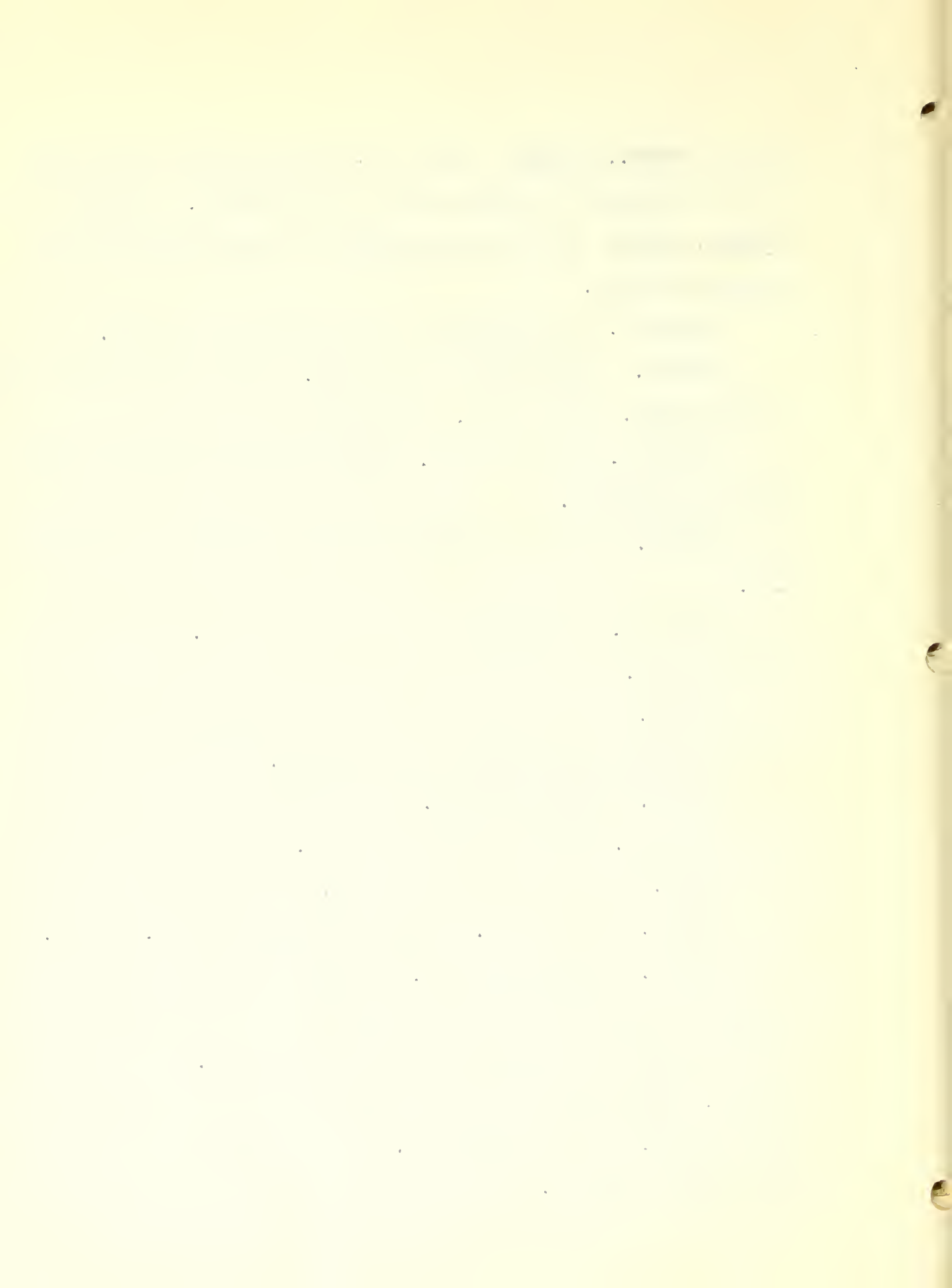
NOTARY. Who is persecuting here? (Every time the NOTARY speaks, nobody pays any attention.)

HELENA. (Half in tears.) Daddy, let's leave it all, let's go away!--Manka, you ask him too!

MANKA. Let's go, dearest uncle!

HELENA. Pen Antoni! (She makes signs to him.) Well!

DAMAZY. (Furiously) Ah! ah, ah! (Restraining himself) Either I'm crazy, or they all are. Am I doing anything bad? Let's get our bearings--my head is topsy-turvy.--Listen, Antoni, for at least you aren't a woman, you have some logic--and besides, it is a question of your aunt--have I done anything bad? Tell me!



ANTONI. Well, so far as I understand it, you've done only what you had a lawful right to do.

NOTARY. Why, of course.

DAMAZY. What's lawful is lawful--but am I right?

ANTONI. The boundary between what is lawful and what is right is so subtle--

NOTARY. Pardon me, there isn't any. That's a prejudice.

DAMAZY. (Answering ANTONI) What?--But put yourself in my place. If you were in this position, what would you have done?

ANTONI. How should I know? It's a delicate matter.

DAMAZY. What's that? You don't know?

NOTARY. Without knowledge of the law, no one knows.

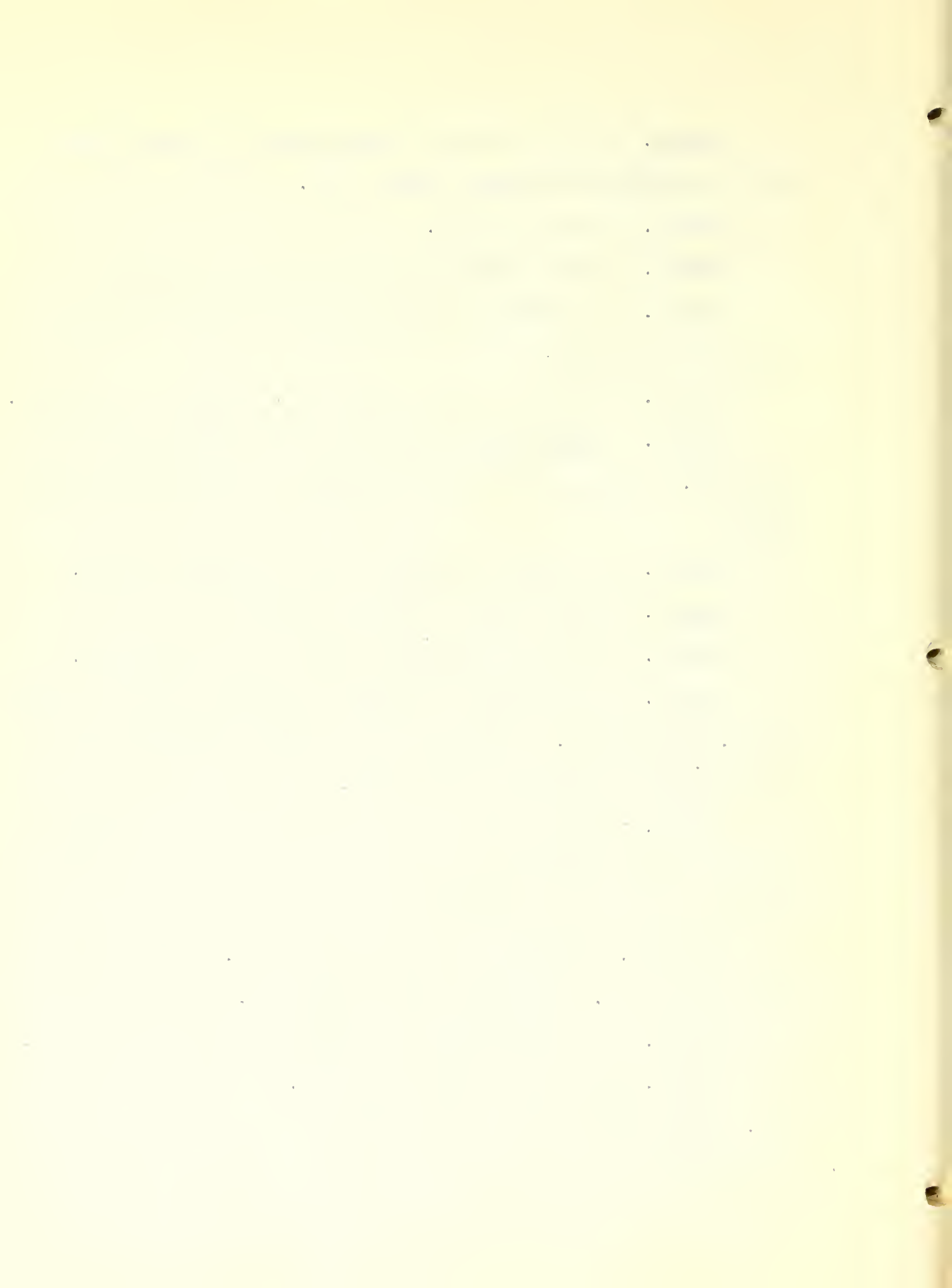
ANTONI. Furthermore, as your future son-in-law, I should be a partial judge. Involuntarily material interests might have some influence upon my opinion.

DAMAZY. How's that? Then if, for example, somebody draws a handkerchief out of your pocket, you mustn't say anything to him about it, ^{but} ~~and~~ expose yourself to him again?

TYKALSKA. (Weeping) Such a comparison! (Walking away) She'll fall ill! (She goes out at the left.)

HELENA. But daddy, that's something entirely different.

DAMAZY. Eh--you stupid--sit still. I'm not talking to you. (To ANTONI) Well, talk--what is a man to do to such a cut^{up} purse?



ANTONI. Punish him, of course. (A gesture of assent from the NOTARY)

DAMAZY. So what is the difference between a small and a large theft? Why, bless my soul, when it's a question of thousands and millions, are the foulest tricks called skill? diplomacy? Why? Tell me.

ANTONI. You can guess my answer--but just now that isn't the question.

DAMAZY. What is then?

ANTONI. It's a question of how you are to proceed. You are asking yourself that question, and being unable to answer it at once, you are applying to me. But you have a better counsellor, who will be sufficient.

NOTARY. (Applying this to himself) Without boasting--

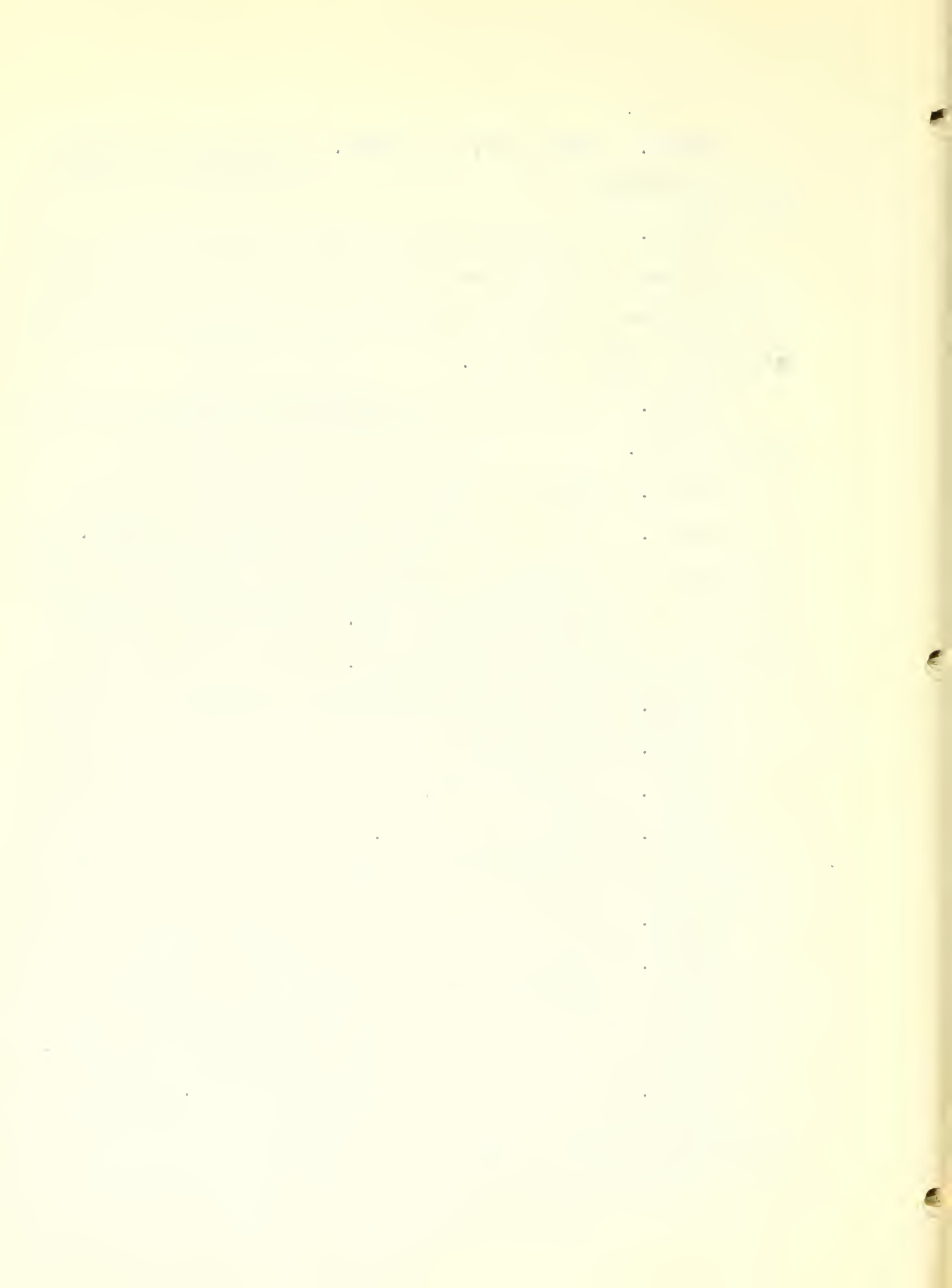
DAMAZY. Who's that?

ANTONI. Your own heart.

DAMAZY. Heart! Ha, ha, ha!--~~T~~he heart is always making a fool of the intellect--bless my soul--I am never governed by my heart.

ANTONI. (Kissing him on the shoulder) You talk, sir, like every subjugated man who is eternally rebelling against the rule of his wife, but nevertheless does what she wants.

DAMAZY. Go to the devil with your chatter! (Aside, walking up and down) Hm, hm, the end of it all will be that they will call me a greedy man, a man without a heart, the



persecutor of a widow! The women will curse me! It would be absolutely wasted, after all! I don't want it, I don't want anything for myself! (After a moment, aloud) Listen here, Antoni, I can't forget that your aunt lived a dozen or more years, bless my soul, with my brother, that she is accustomed to comfort. I do not wish to deprive her of everything. I will give her half; go tell her.

NOTARY. (Aside) Half! That's a good profit. (He goes to the left, to SEWERYN, whom he meets in the doorway) Is your aunt there?

SEWERYN. She is. (The NOTARY goes out.)

DAMAZY. Let her pay up her sister out of that, let her remember her dear Seweryn. Anyhow, let her act as she wants to--it's enough that she has half. I give the other half to you, her own nephew.--They will not gossip.

ANTONI. (Amazed) To me?

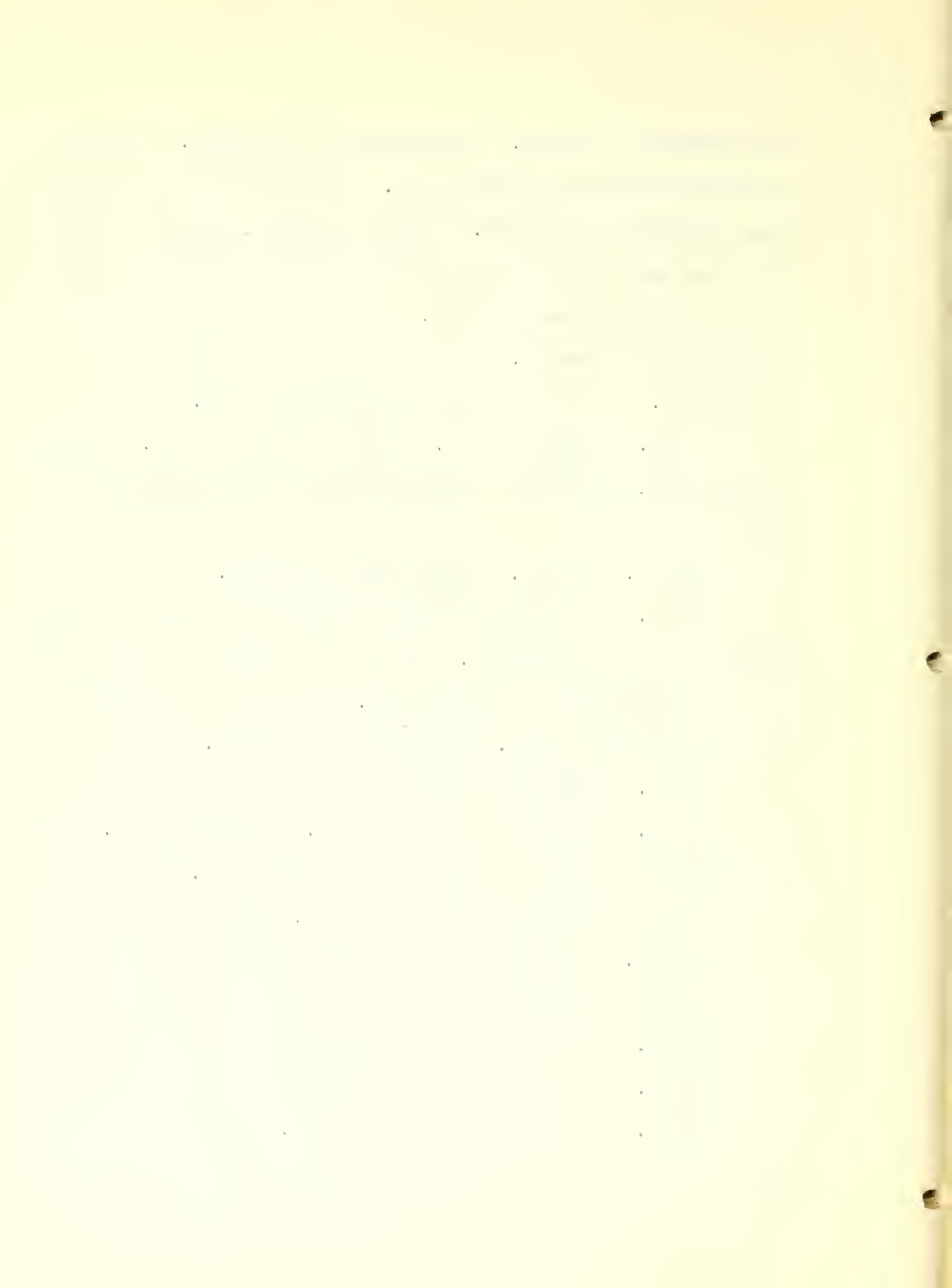
DAMAZY. I'll not take it at all. I renounce it. Even so Helena will get it as soon as you marry her. Only you will give poor Marya a dowry from that.

SEWERYN. (Aside) Ah, so they're giving her a dowry. Really, that's the only means of salvation for me.

ANTONI. I'd do that very gladly--but--

DAMAZY. No buts--go to your aunt now and tell her.

ANTONI. But that's not my concern. Please consider, sir, that since it's a question of myself here--



DAMAZY. Don't you say a thing to me. Go if you want; if you don't, don't. But if you don't go, you'll not get Helena, and that's that!

HELENA. (Pushing him) Go, go quickly!

ANTONI. Then you definitely make this a condition?

DAMAZY. Are you still here? (ANTONI goes out at the left.)

SCENE IX

DAMAZY, pacing the room, SEWERYN, HELENA, MANKA

SEWERYN (Aside) Auntie has done a lot of stupid things, and now she wants me to patch them up for her. I'm curious how to begin here now. (He remains at one side. After a moment) Really, there is no other way out!

HELENA. (To MANKA, indicating SEWERYN with a glance) Look, look! How he is waiting for you to notice him. That's significant.

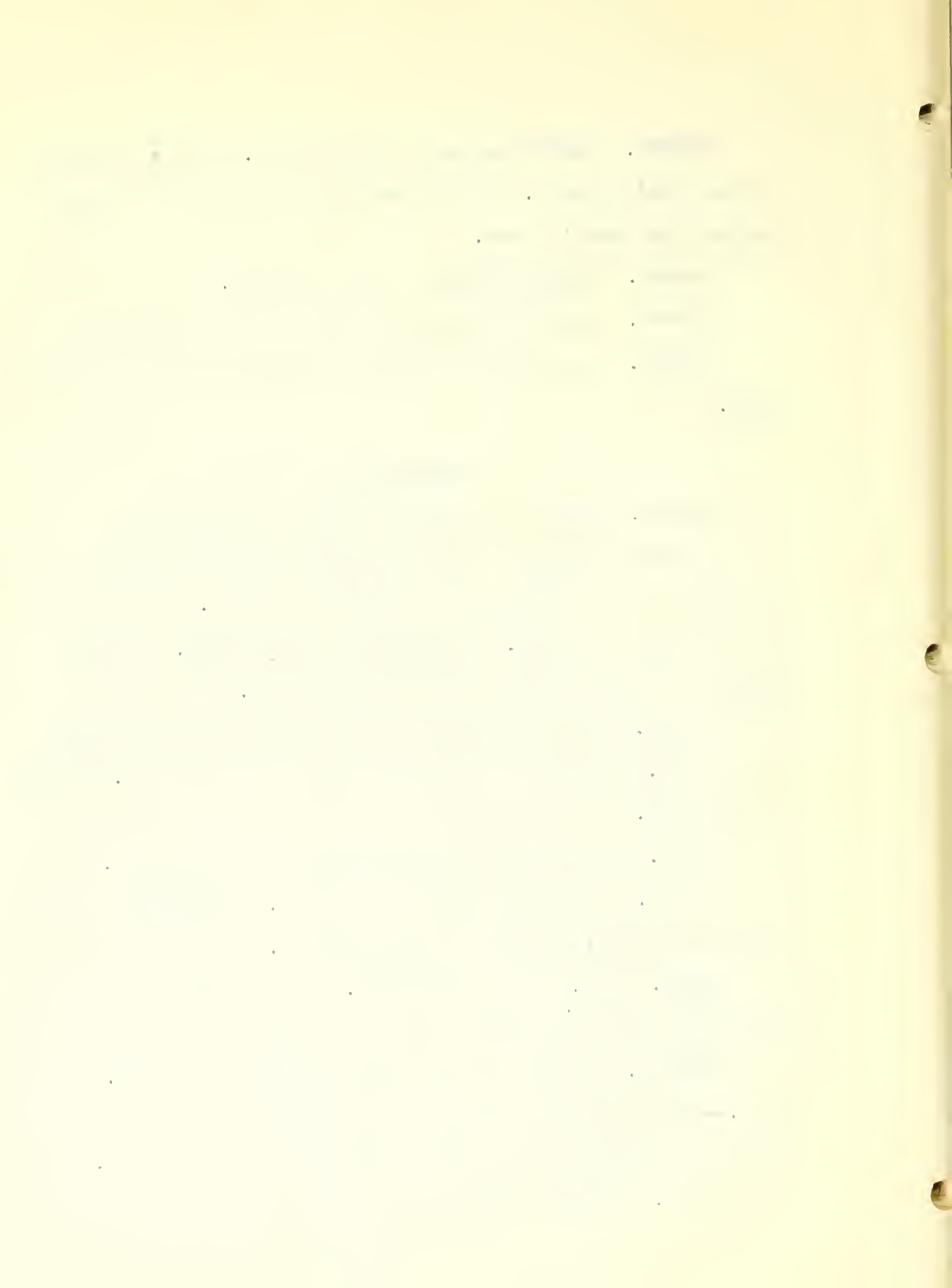
MANKA. That would be too naïve, if not insolent.

HELENA. He magnetises you, clearly. (Jokingly) Wait, I will withdraw; perhaps you can make up.

MANKA. You are always joking. (HELENA goes over to the side, to the mirror.)

SEWERYN. (Aside) They're making it easy for me. That's good.--(Approaching MANKA, in a low voice) Manka, I've been looking in vain for the proper moment to talk with you.

MANKA. (Ironically) Am I so difficult to approach?



SEWERYN. You refuse to understand me. (After a moment)
I know that you may have been offended--and you have had reason.
(He tries to take her hand.)

MANKA. (Not giving her hand, loftily) Never more so
than now.

SEWERYN. How's that?

MANKA. If you yourself do not comprehend, it would be
useless to explain. (She summons HELENA with her eyes.)

SEWERYN. But you do not take into consideration the
position I was in. I will explain everything to you--only
grant me a moment's conversation alone.

MANKA. (Laughing mockingly, to HELENA) Please, Helena
dear!

SEWERYN. (In a lower tone, clenching his teeth) How's
that? Aren't you going to say anything more to me?

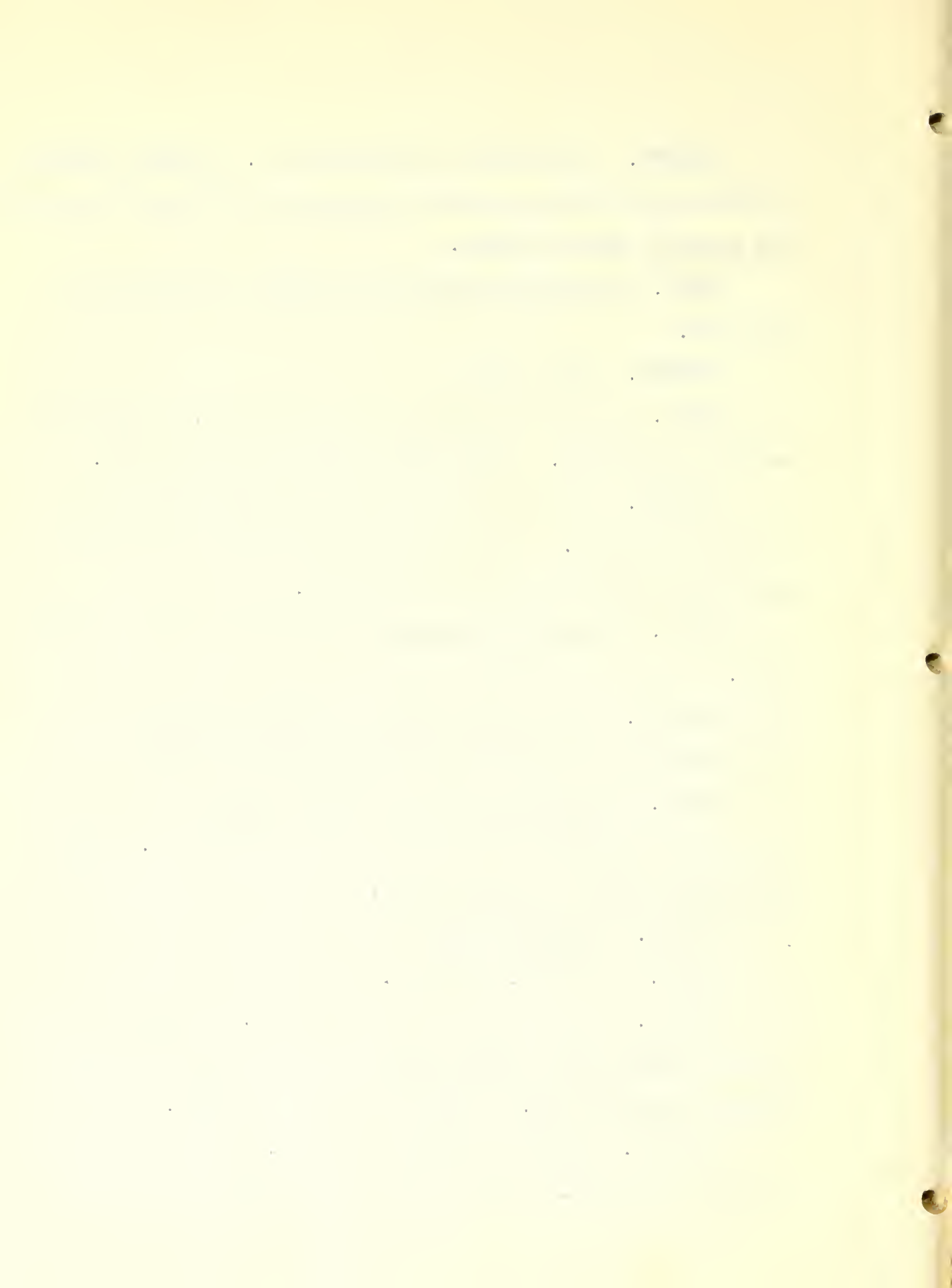
MANKA. (Scoffingly, taking HELENA'S arm) Remembering
my former illusions, I'll spare you that pleasure. (They
go towards the door at the right.)

HELENA. (In a low tone) Did you give him the gate? *mitten?*

MANKA. Let's go, let's go.

HELENA. You did just the right thing. (On the way out,
HELENA throws him a glance, moving her lips as if to say,
"Good enough for you!" They go out at the right.)

SEWERYN. (Aside) Then it's all up! I must continue
to bear this yoke! Shall I never free myself? (A moment



later, after the entrance of the characters of the next scene, he goes out, much agitated, through the central^{er} door.)

SCENE X

PAN DAMAZY, ZEGOCINA, the NOTARY; following them, after a moment, ANTONI.

ZEGOCINA. (Rushes in, covering her ears with her hands, followed by the NOTARY) I refuse, I refuse, I refuse absolutely. Leave me alone, do! (Taking both hands of DAMAZY, who has been pacing up and down throughout the preceding scene) Brother, there are few such men as you--half a saint. Now I know it, and if I did not recognize it in you at the beginning, it's my fault. But I refuse. (In a low voice) And you must refuse until he clears out.

DAMAZY. (Aside) Has she gone daft?--or what? (Aloud) What am I to refuse? I don't understand anything.

NOTARY. (Making a face) With your permission--eh--eh--eh--I will arrange it for you. I have the right to do so.

ZEGOCINA. What right? what right?

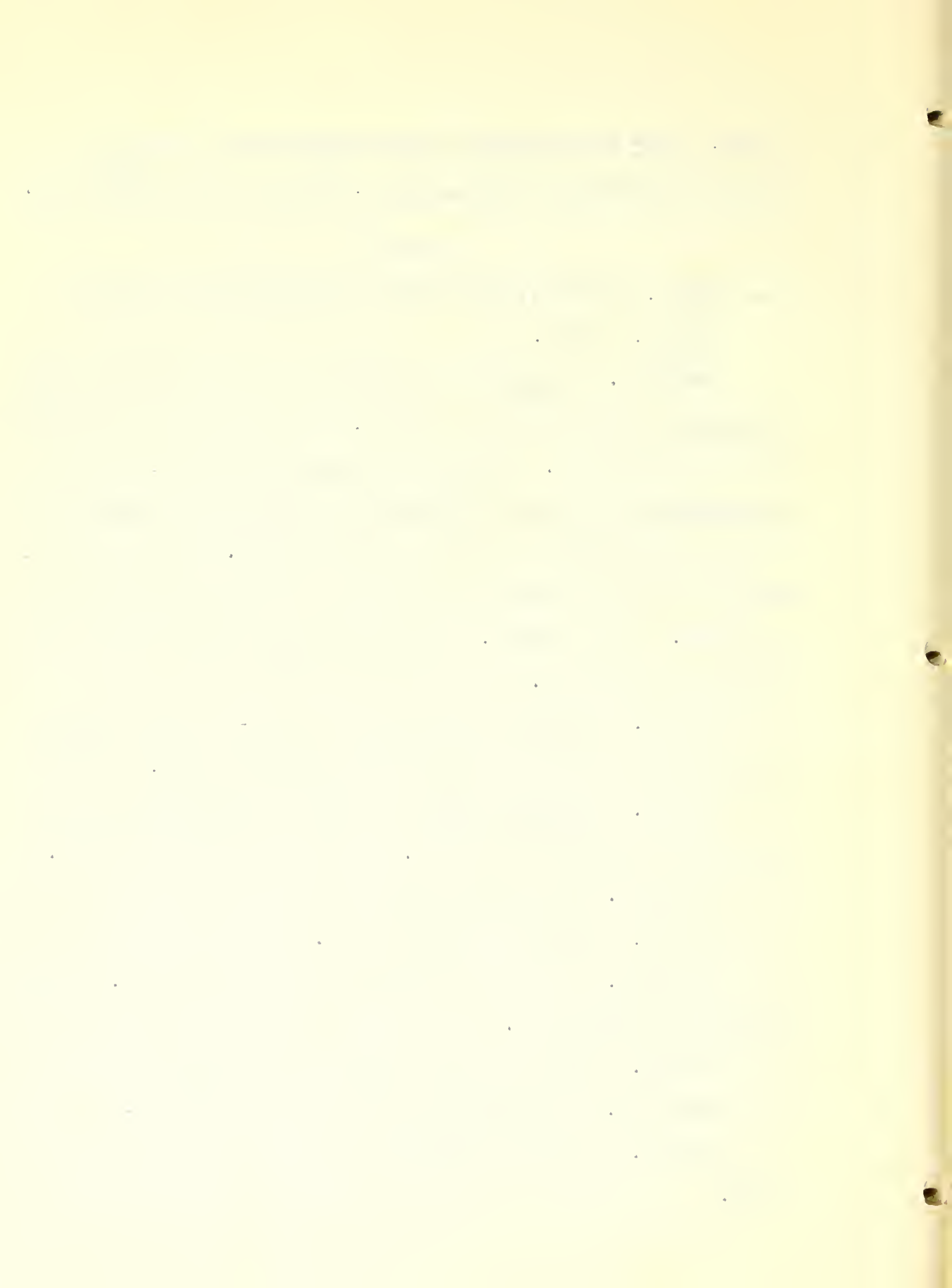
NOTARY. You are disloyal to me.

ZEGOCINA. I value my own independence too much. (Aside) This man frightens me.

NOTARY. Then what has become of our agreement?

ZEGOCINA. (Stopping her ears) What agreement! I refuse!

NOTARY. It was a voluntary agreement, which you will not deny.



ZEGOCINA. You coaxed it out of me in a moment of irritation--I didn't consider. (Aside) I should have made a beautiful mess of it!

NOTARY. You were of age and in your right mind...

ZEGOCINA. (Standing suddenly before him and extending her arms) Well, nevertheless, I have nothing--and what will you do ^{to} ~~for~~ me?

NOTARY. (Angrily) That remains to be seen--you can't withdraw.

DAMAZY. But, pardon me, bless my soul, what's going on? For perhaps you have not understood me.--I sent Antoni. What did he tell you?

ZEGOCINA. Nothing.

DAMAZY. (To ANTONI) What's this? Nothing?

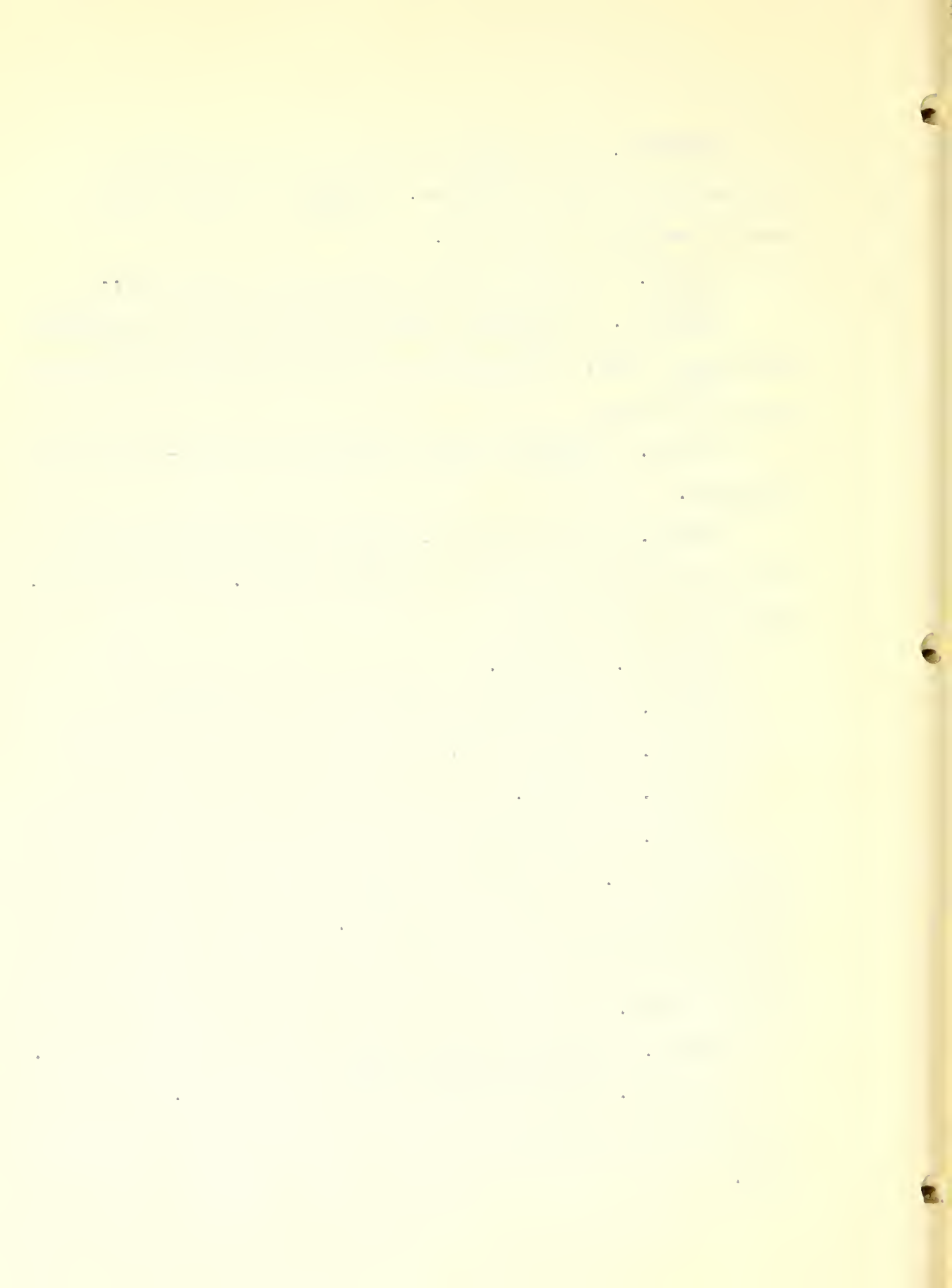
ANTONI. Why, nothing!

DAMAZY. Nothing!

ANTONI. Your decision in my favor I could not regard as irrevocable. You were too angry, and what is more, it would have been an act of injustice. So I told auntie that you two would come to a joint agreement about the division of the estate.

DAMAZY. (Twiddling his thumbs) What he knew, he told!

ZEGOCINA. That's it--not another word more. Only the notary came in before him with the news that you offer me half.



DAMAZY. Oh, I beg your pardon, bless my soul, there was a condition--there is a bequest.

NOTARY. A bequest--what bequest?

ZEGOCINA. (Low to DAMAZY) Excellent! (To the NOTARY) Now you see! There is not even half.

DAMAZY. A will in favor of Pani Tykalska.

ZEGOCINA. Yes, of my sister. (Aside) How clever he is!--(She takes DAMAZY aside and talks with him alone.)

ANTONI. (Looking for his hat, aside) nyhow, do what you want yourselves, arrange things as your hearts dictate, but let me alone. I know that I have my Helena, and i don't care about anything else! (Finding his hat, he goes out at the right, giving them a joking smile and wave of his hand.)

ZEGOCINA. (To DAMAZY, in a low voice) My dear brother, have mercy; protect me from this man--I prefer to tell you everything now. Just imagine, he makes claims. (She speaks in his ear; DAMAZY bursts out laughing.) Some words escaped me, and he took advantage of it--but I refuse!

DAMAZY. (Looking at the NOTARY, who is pacing up and down with a wry face) I expect so!--But that would be a dog's life for you!

ZEGOCINA. (Aside) I should get under a guardianship such as I've never been under in all my life. (In a low voice, to DAMAZY) I believe you, I know that you will not do me any injury; your action has opened my eyes. So divide it as your conscience bids you.

DAMAZY. (Aside) She's got round me splendidly, bless my soul!

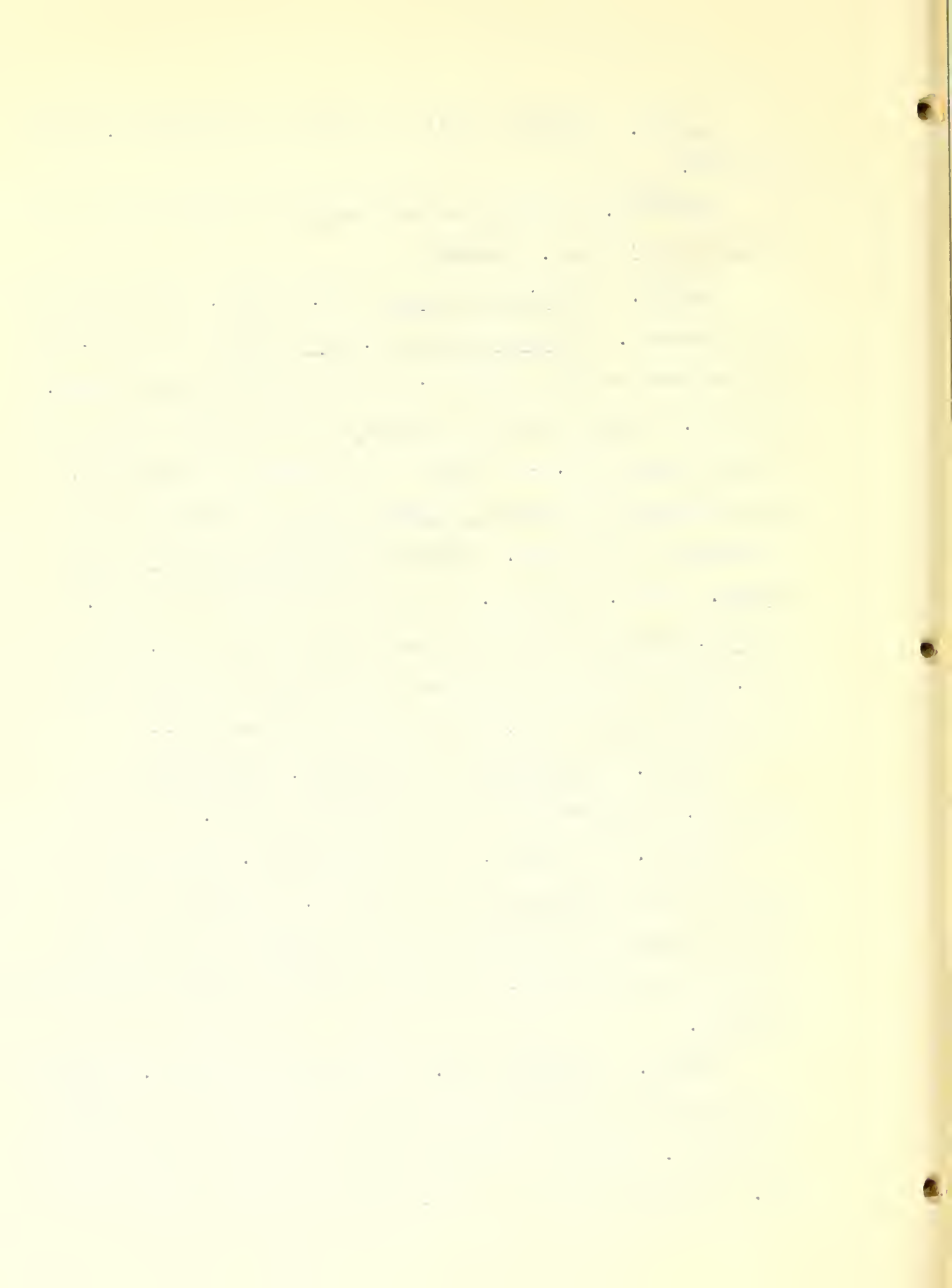
ZEGOCINA. Only let us not speak of business at all as long as he is here. Agreed?

DAMAZY. (Kissing her hand) Yes indeed, with the greatest pleasure. (Folding his arms, artlessly) You see--why did we have to make such a pother about this stupid money! My Lord! Could there be pleasure greater than harmony--and in the family too!--You know it's engraved on the ducat, bless my soul: (With his finger raised) "Concordia"--or something of the sort! (ZEGOCINA speaks to him in a low voice.) Good! Harmony! Just as you yourself desired!-- (Aloud, to the NOTARY) We both engage your help, my dear sir, when it comes to putting the division in legal form; but on the other hand, at present, bless my soul--

NOTARY. (Completing the sentence, ironically) At present, I observe that I am superfluous here!

DAMAZY. No indeed, for heaven's sake! What about hospitality? (Jovially) But you see, these conferences of yours have so fatigued my sister-in-law that she would like to rest a little, to have a mind free from these business matters.

NOTARY. (Offended) Oh! Of course, of course. (Aside) At least Genio will make a good thing of it if he marries that girl. (Aloud) I won't intrude in the least--eh--eh--eh. But since things are so, (Taking DAMAZY aside) I should



like only one more word to say.

DAMAZY. What's that?

NOTARY. I speak now not as a notary, but as a man.

(In a honied tone) Remember the orphan!

DAMAZY. Well, what then?

NOTARY. All legislation protects orphans! When it comes to a sharing--don't wrong her!

DAMAZY. (Surprised) What spirit is this speaking through you?

NOTARY. A voice--from here! (He strikes his breast.)

DAMAZY. Ah, you're to be congratulated! (He offers his hand.)

JUN 25 1986

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